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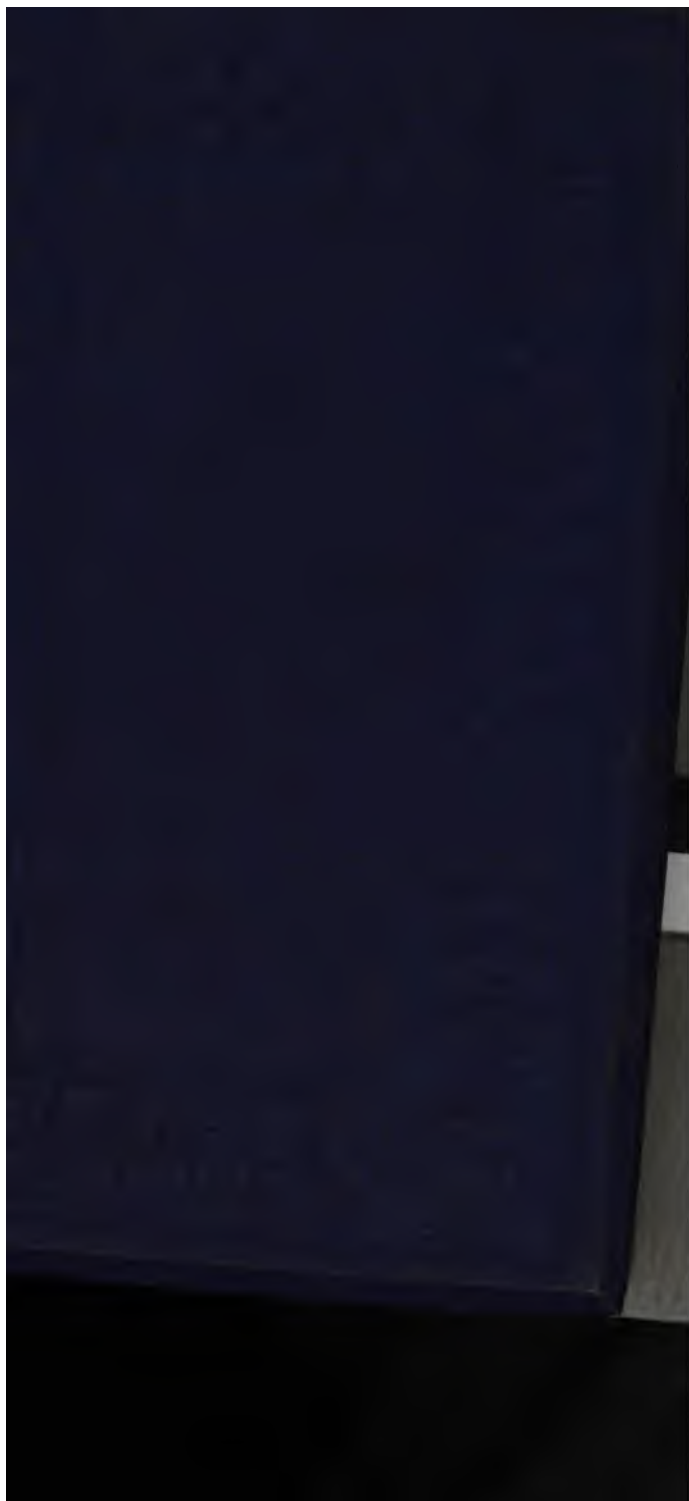
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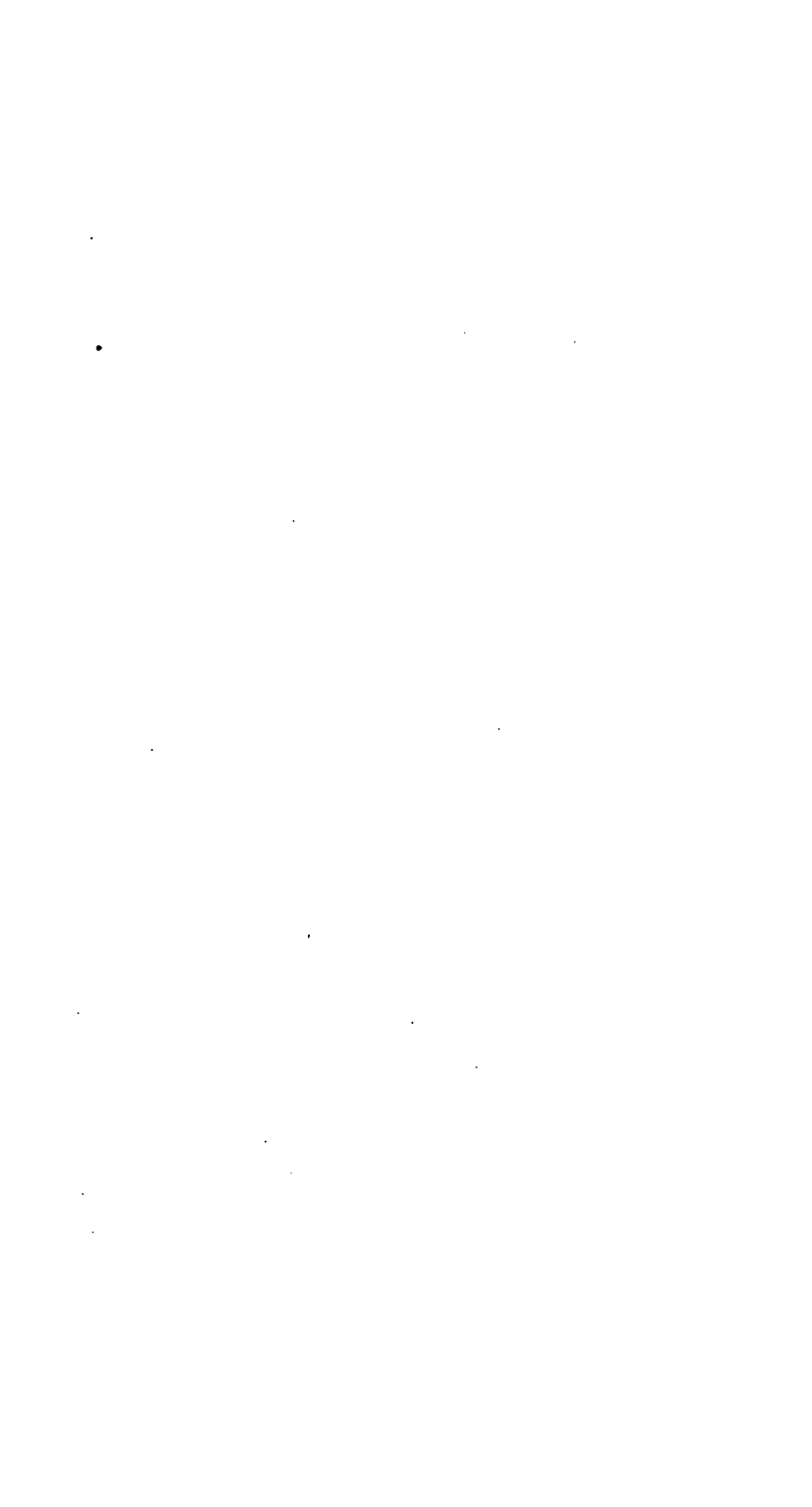
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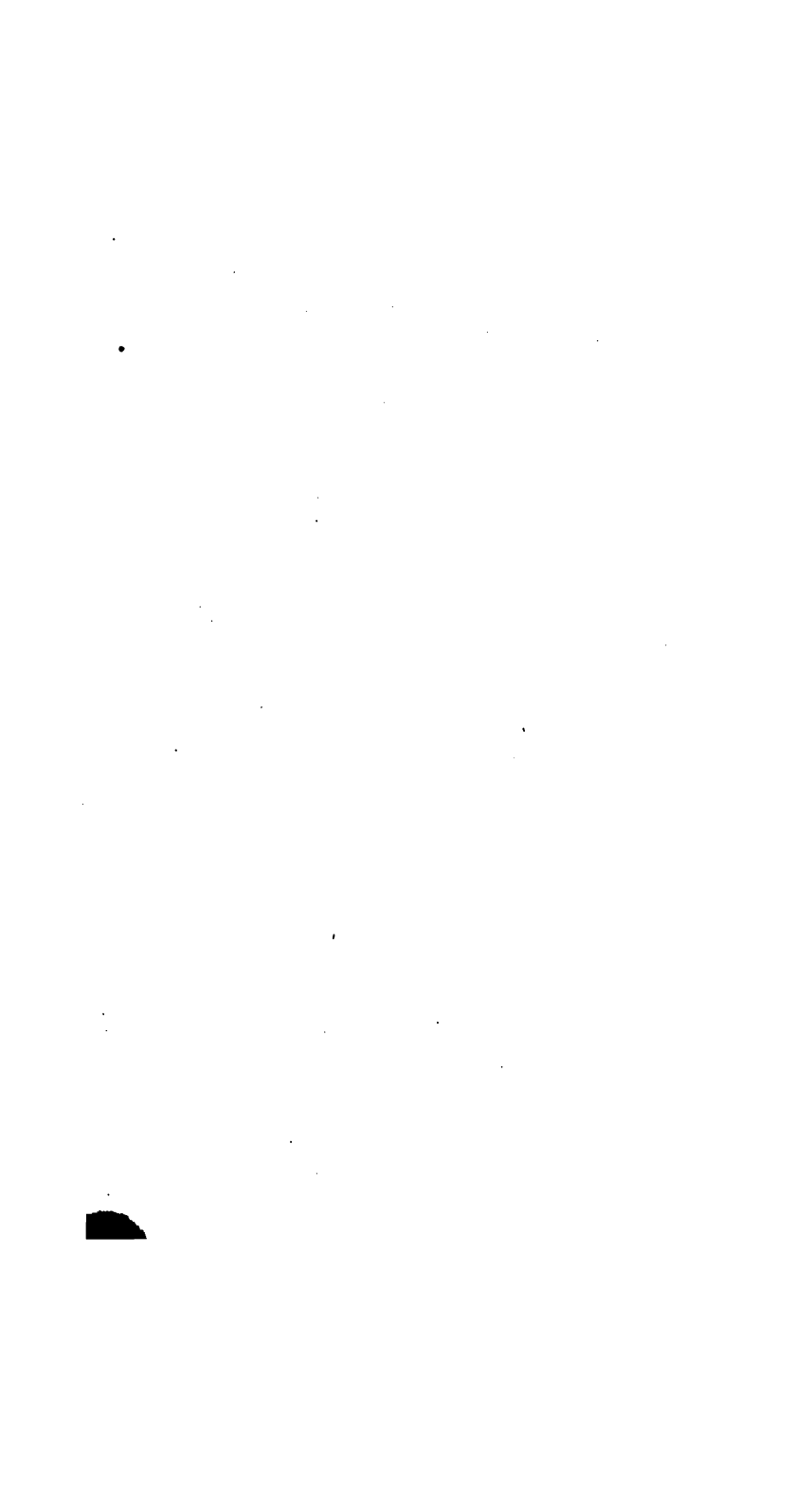






GOLDEN LADDER SERIES.







“My little girl, what troubles you so?”—P. 4.





NETTIE'S MISSION:

STORIES ILLUSTRATIVE
OF
THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY
ALICE GRAY,
AUTHOR OF "LITTLE KATY AND JOLLY JIM," &c.



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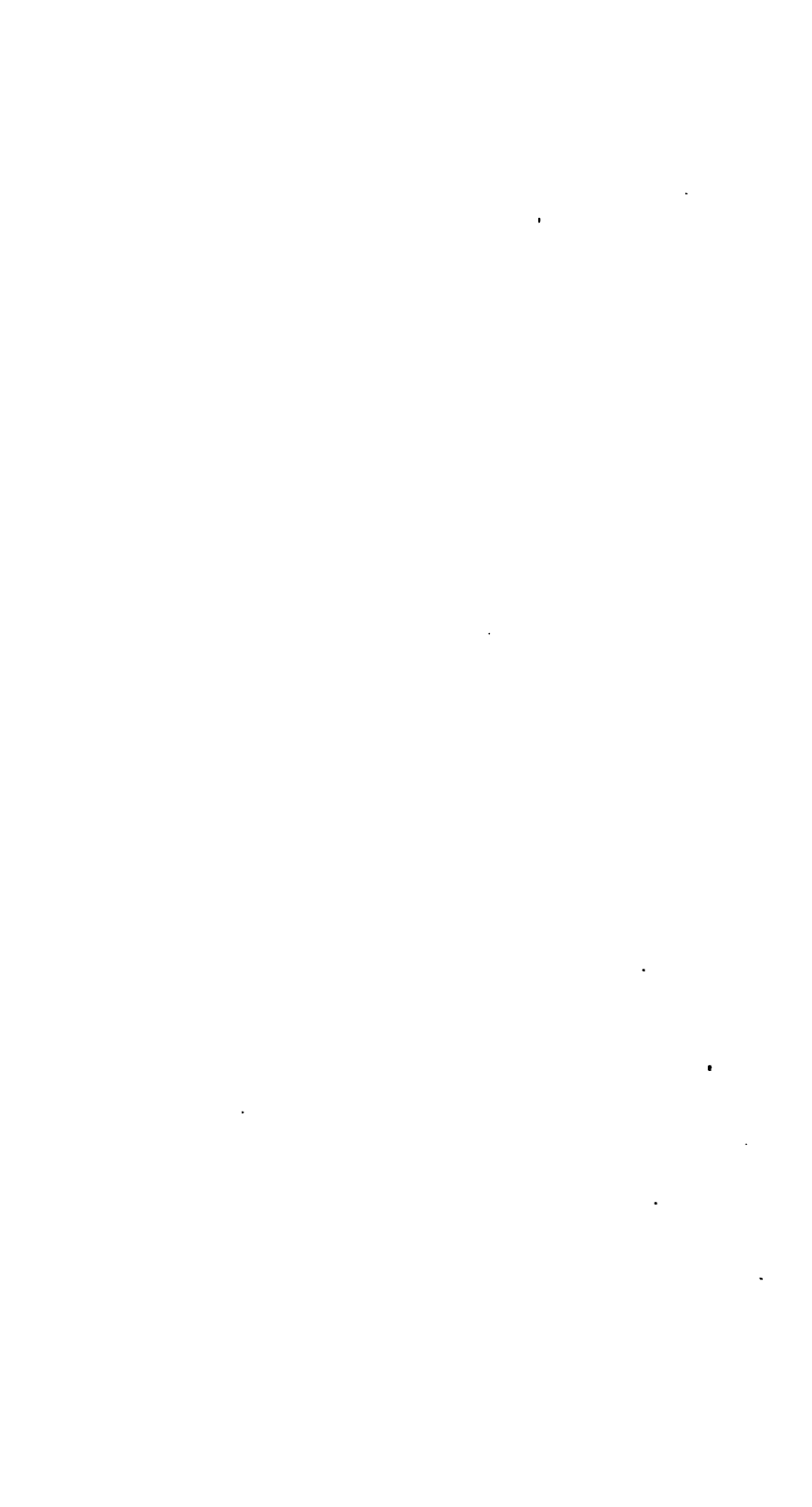
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NETTIE'S MISSION.

CHAPTER I.

OUR FATHER.

IN a pleasant little nook, formed by a crevice between two huge rocks, and roofed over by a slab of stone which had fallen from the overhanging cliffs above, there sat one morning a gentleman, who seemed to be more interested in the scene around him than in the book which lay open upon his knee.

He had chosen a very pretty spot for his reading-room. Behind him rose the stern, gray rocks, while before him, rolling its waves almost to his feet, lay the bright sea, rippling up on the beach with a murmuring sound; and, away in the distance, he could see the white sails of ships flapping idly in the slight breeze; while, above all, the soft April sky smiled down upon sea and land, as if to win men's hearts from the beauty of earth to that more glorious land which lies beyond its blue depths.

He was sitting there, watching the ebb and flow of the tide, and thinking, unwillingly, that it would soon reach his retreat, when a low sound, like a suppressed sob, struck on his ear. He raised his head and listened, for he had thought himself alone. It came again, a muffled, uncertain sound, but, unmistakably, the crying of a child. Rising

from his seat, he went out upon the beach and looked up and down the long stretch of sand ; but no one was to be seen, and he was about to return to the cave to listen once more for the strange sound, when the flutter of a dress caught his eye. Walking around the point which hid its owner from sight, he almost stumbled upon a little figure crouching down upon the rocks and crying bitterly. Miserably dressed, with her long hair falling in disorder upon her neck, and her cheeks stained with tears, she was certainly a sad sight.

"My little girl, what troubles you so?" asked the gentleman, leaning over her and speaking in a gentler voice than she had heard for many a day.

The child tossed back the tangled hair from her eyes and turned toward him with a wondering look, ceasing to cry as she gazed into those dark, bright eyes, which were fixed upon her with such pity. It was a noble face, with its high broad forehead and firm but kindly mouth ; and Nettie Allen gazed at it with astonishment, that such a face should bend tenderly over her.

But when the gentleman asked again, "What troubles you, my child?" her sobs broke out afresh, and she exclaimed, half angrily, half mournfully,—

"I wish I was dead ! Oh, I wish so I was dead !"

"Hush, hush ! You must not say you wish for death in that violent manner. Try to tell me what makes you cry so ;" and he drew away one of the hands which concealed her face. "Has any one been unkind to you ?"

"Yes ;" and the girl snatched her hand from his, placed her elbows on her knees, and, resting her chin on her clasped hands, sat gazing out over the sea without another word.

But Mr. Thorn was not repelled by her rude answer. Rough as her manner was, she was a child, and a very sad child, too ; he could see that in the mournful eyes, which looked so steadily out over the rippling sea.

"Who is it that has injured you?" he asked, very gently.

"Everybody," she answered, in the same brusque tone.

"Have you no friends at all?"

"No, I haven't."

"Poor child!"

The girl looked toward him again, watching him closely for a moment, and then, her whole manner changing, said tremulously,—

"No, I haven't anybody at all. No mother, nor father, nor nobody."

"You have one Father, little one."

"No! he died long ago, they say, when I was a baby. All the other children have got one, but not me."

"You have a Father. He lives up there."

Her eyes followed his pointing finger, then fell again to his face, with the old questioning look.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that away beyond that beautiful sky, far above all the din, and toil, and weariness of this earth, your Father lives—another Father than he who, you say, died when you were a baby."

"Who told you that?" asked the child.

"He told me. Years ago, a message was given me from Him, telling me that all the little children, whether they were merry and glad, or sad and lonely, were His children, and that I must tell them about Him—tell them that He is their Father, and that He will take care of them and keep them safe in His love."

The eager, wondering eyes fixed on him, told him how new and strange this story was to her.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, as he paused. "I never saw Him."

"No, you will not see Him until He calls you to the home to which He brings all His children. But I can tell you of Him now, so that you may learn how to reach that beautiful home. Would you like to go there?"

"Yes, if that Father loves me; 'cause nobody does here."

"Do you live in this village?" asked Mr. Thorn.

"Yes; I live with my aunt. Uncle is a fisherman."

"It is strange I never saw you before. I thought I knew every child in the village."

"We've only been here a week," said Nettie. "We used to live ten miles away; but uncle thinks it's safer coming in here with the boat when it storms. I wish they'd all go off in the old boat and never come back," she added, in a muttering tone.

"Your Father in heaven does not love to hear you speak so."

"He couldn't hear, away off there," she answered, quickly.

"Yes, He can hear and see all we do and say. This great Father is not a man like me, He is the holy God of heaven; and it grieves Him to hear you speak wicked, revengeful words."

"Does He watch me all the time?" asked Nettie. "I don't see how it is."

"You cannot understand it; but you can understand that He loves you very dearly, and that He wants you to make ready to go to Him, by being very gentle and kind, even to those who are not kind to you. Will you try to do that for Him?"

"Aunt will punish me when I go home," said she, without answering his question, "because I couldn't carry the basket of fish to the house. It was so heavy I let it fall, and the handle broke. Uncle struck me when I did it; and I know aunt will beat me, too."

"I hope she will not; but if she does, what shall you do?"

"I'll strike! But did you say the new Father wanted me not to strike back?" she asked, suddenly checking herself.

"Yes. I will tell you what He wants you to do. If

your aunt scolds you, don't answer by one wicked word. Try to tell her gently how the accident happened. If she will not listen to you, try to bear the punishment quietly ; and then go and tell your Father in heaven all your troubles, and ask Him to help you."

"How will I tell Him, if He's up in the sky?"

"Kneel down by your window, where you can look up toward heaven, and tell Him all about it. He will hear every word, even the softest whisper ; and He will surely help His child."

"Then I'll tell Him. It'll be nice—won't it?"

Her new friend had completely won the poor little heart ; and now, when he rose from his seat upon the stone beside her, she, too, rose, and, coming close to him, looked up into his face, as she said,—

"Please, will I never see you more?"

"Oh, we shall see each other very often, I hope," said Mr. Thorn, touched by her pleading tone and the entreating look in her eyes. "I am the minister. I shall come to see your aunt some day."

"Come now ; do come now," said Nettie, eagerly.

"I cannot come to-day ; but you shall see me soon. Now I must say good-bye. But first tell me your name."

"Nettie Allen."

"Well, Nettie, you must try to remember what I told you about that dear Father above the sky."

"I'll remember ; I can't forget, when He's all I've got," said the child.

Mr. Thorn turned back to glance at her, after he had left her. She was still standing gazing after him ; but, the next moment, he saw her run along the beach and disappear within one of the fishing-huts which lined the shore. A sudden impulse led him toward the huts ; and, as he neared one of them, he heard a woman's angry voice and the sound of heavy blows.

Quickening his steps, he reached the door, but not in

time to save his little friend from her aunt's cruelty ; for as he lifted his cane to knock, the door was flung open and Nettie rushed out, with her hands held tightly over her mouth, and ran swiftly down behind the rocks. Mr. Thorn followed her ; but when he reached the spot where she had hidden herself, he paused.

She stood at the water's edge, with her hands clasped tightly together and her face lifted to the evening sky, whispering, in a choked, sobbing voice,—

"Dear new Father, don't let her do so any more! Please take care of me, for there's nobody else ; and the good man said you would."

Mr. Thorn turned softly away, leaving the lonely heart to be comforted by God, and resolving, that before another evening should fall he would see Nettie's aunt, and try what he could do in the child's behalf.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORPHAN'S HOME.

EARLY the next morning Mr. Thorn went out, with the purpose of learning something about his new *protégée*. He was a welcome visitor in the low, small huts in which the fishermen lived during the summer months, for he always came to pour a little cheer and comfort into the hearts of the toiling men and their no less careworn wives, and to call a smile into the face of every child who might chance to meet him in his walk. He was not long in learning all he wished to know. Many a mother's heart among those poor people had been made to ache already by the ill-usage which they knew fell to Nettie's share.

"Harsh words and blows are what she lives on," said one woman, with tears in her eyes. "It is a bitter shame

to treat her so. The girl would be a good child, if she were let alone."

As Mr. Thorn walked on toward the cabin, into which Nettie had disappeared the night before, he saw her sitting on the sands beside a tall, half-featured woman, mending a net. She glanced up as she heard his step, and a bright look of pleased recognition flitted over her face; but she did not speak, nor attempt to rise.

"How does my little friend feel to-day?" asked the gentleman. "I am the minister of this parish," he continued, turning to the woman, who had looked up from her work with a surprised stare. "I met your child out on the rocks yesterday, and we had quite a chat together."

"Oh, I dare say," replied the woman; "she's always idling round where she's no business to be. What do you mean," she exclaimed, facing round upon the girl, "by putting yourself in the gentleman's way?"

"She did not do so," said Mr. Thorn. "It was I that put myself in her way. She was sitting on the rocks, and I went up there and began to talk to her. She tells me that she is an orphan."

"Yes, she is; and that's why she's here, a burden on me and my man, when we've got five of our own to feed. Her father was never no good. He set up for a store-keeper, and thought himself above us plain fisher-folk; but when he died he wasn't worth a cent, and left his sick wife and this child for us to look after. She died just after him, and the child's been eating of our bread ever since."

"Bitter bread it must have been," thought Mr. Thorn, as he looked down at Nettie, who had been listening in silence to these words. "How would you like to put her out to service?" he said aloud.

"I'd like it right well. She's always fighting with my boys, and I'd be glad of peace in the house. Are you wanting a girl?"

"Yes. My wife is an invalid. She needs some one to

wait constantly upon her ; and as she is fond of children, I have proposed to her to take Nettie as a handmaid."

" She don't know nothing about sickness."

" That is not necessary. My wife is not very ill ; but she is helpless, and needs some one to run about for her and attend to all her little wants. Would you like to go, Nettie ?"

" I'd like to go to the new Father, if He's there."

" What are you saying ?" asked the woman, roughly.

But Mr. Thorn laid his hand on the child's head, and turned her face toward himself.

" Would you like to come and live in my house with me and a good, kind lady ?"

" And isn't the new Father there ?" asked Nettie again.

" You're talking nonsense," interrupted her aunt. " I hear the baby crying in the house. Go up and bring him down ; and don't you speak a sharp word to him, or I'll punish you well."

The girl rose to obey ; but, as she passed Mr. Thorn, she looked wistfully at him.

" I'd like to go with you now," she said, very softly.

" I do believe the girl's an idiot," said the woman.

" That's just her way,—talking nonsense that nobody can understand. She just takes after her father. You may take her, I'm sure, if you want her."

" Are you willing to bind her out to me ?—to release all claim to her ?"

" Willing enough. But there comes my man ; perhaps you'd best ask him, as the child belonged to his brother. Come on here, Sam !" she called out to a fisherman, who was coming up the beach with his lines over his arm. " This gentleman is the minister, and he wants John's Nettie for a servant-girl."

" Well, I don't object," said the man. " She and you is always a-quarrelling ; so the best thing for her is to go. Will you clothe her ?" he asked, turning to Mr. Thorn.

"I will take the whole charge of her, if you choose to bind her to me," said the gentleman. "Will you do that?"

"Yes, and be glad to do it. She's been nothin' but a worry in the house, ever since she was a baby."

Poor Nettie! As Mr. Thorn looked at her coming down from the house, carrying in her arms "the baby," a stout boy of nearly two years old, his heart ached to think that she should be so easily and so gladly given up to a perfect stranger, by the only two persons in the world to whom she had a right to look for love and kindness.

"It is all settled, Nettie," he said, as she came near. "You are to come up to the village to live with me."

"When? To-day?" asked Nettie, creeping close to him.

"I suppose that she can come to-day, as well as at any other time,—can she not?" said Mr. Thorn.

"Oh, yes. But she aint got no clothes but those on her back."

"I will attend to the clothes. Now Nettie, say good-by."

Nettie turned reluctantly to her aunt.

"Good-by. See that you behave yourself," was her harsh farewell.

But the man was less hard. Perhaps some childish recollections of the dead brother, who had been his playmate and constant companion in their boyhood, came into his heart, as he saw that brother's child turning willingly away from his home to give herself into the care of an entire stranger. Something like tenderness must have yet lingered within him, for he kissed her, as he said, with a little break in his voice,—

"So you're glad to leave us, eh?" It aint been a very bright house for you, I confess."

Nettie made no reply, but, stealing again, in her timor-

ous manner, to Mr. Thorn, stood quietly at his side, as if to say, "Now that is over, let us go."

It had not been his intention to take her with him that morning; he had merely expected to engage her services as a maid for his wife: but the woman's cruelly rough manner, and Nettie's evident terror of her, had made him resolve to take her at once from this wretched home.

When they reached the village street, and had left the fishing-huts quite in the distance, Mr. Thorn suddenly felt a touch upon the skirt of his coat. He had been very silent; for he was revolving in his mind the best means of improving Nettie's appearance before he should introduce her into his wife's neat sitting-room. He looked down now with a smile, feeling the little hand touching his coat.

"Did you think I had forgotten you?" said he.

"No. Please, mister——"

"Well, what is it? Do you want anything?"

"Will you keep me with you all the time, and never let me go back? Oh, please do!"

"I will never send you back," said Mr. Thorn, standing still in the road and taking her clasped hands in his, holding them in a strong, firm grasp, which quieted their trembling. "Don't look so terrified, my poor child. If you will try to be a good, honest little girl, you shall stay with me always, if God wills."

"If God will what? Oh, don't let Him send me away. Who is God?"

"He is the great Father, who loves you."

"Oh!"

Her face changed in a moment, and she walked along by his side once more, evidently soothed and calmed. By-and-by, they reached the village store.

"Mr. Thorn!" exclaimed a pleasant voice, as they entered the store; and a round-faced, rosy-cheeked woman came hurrying forward to meet the minister. "I'm really glad to see you. Come into the parlour."

"No, I thank you, Mrs. Dixon; I have called on business to-day. I have picked up this forlorn little damsel, and am taking her home for a pet for my wife. But, first of all, she must be washed and dressed; and I have come in here to buy some calico and muslin for her."

"Surely, surely now, but that child has been hardly dealt with, Mr. Thorn! Just see the way she cowers and shrinks when one looks at her!"

"Yes, she has had a hard life; but she has left it now. I intend to have her indentures made out this afternoon. She is my charge from henceforth. She belonged to some of those people on the shore."

"Oh, I wonder if it wouldn't be the one a neighbour was telling me of this morning. Dear me! but she fairly made me cry, telling me of a poor child that had lately come to the village, and was so sorely ill-used by its aunt."

"I dare say it was this girl. And now I want to buy some clothes for her. Have you any dark calicoes?"

"I'll tell you what I have got, sir," said Mrs. Dixon, as if a new thought had just struck her. "'Twas only yesterday I was laying by some clothes that my Sarah Jane has growed out of; and I do believe as they'd fit that child. I'll get them this minute."

"But may you not need them, Mrs. Dixon?"

"No, indeed, sir. She's grown beyond them, entirely; so they're no good to me. I meant to give them to some needy body; and I do think Providence was in it, that you should bring the poor thing here. Come, little girl, I think I can fit you with some clothes."

But Nettie clung close to Mr. Thorn, and Mrs. Dixon was forced to bring the clothes into the store.

"There, now!" she exclaimed, as she held a dress up before her to test its length, "wouldn't that fit her real good? But, oh, the little thing! How dirty she is; and her hair all uncombed, too! I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Thorn. If you will leave her with me for a couple of

hours, I'll have her as neat as a new pin when you come back."

"But that will give you a great deal of trouble, Mrs. Dixon."

"And surely, if you can do all you have done, you needn't fret for me, Mr. Thorn. Just leave her to me, and let me fix her up."

"You are very good; and I thank you most heartily. Nettie, this kind friend will see that you are made clean and neat; and I will return for you in two hours' time," said Mr. Thorn.

But Nettie would, at first, listen to no such arrangement.

"Oh, don't go away! Please don't!" she said, entreatingly. "I want to go with you. Don't leave me alone; for the new Father is so far away!"

"He is near enough to take care of you, Nettie. I cannot take you with me as you are. You must not be afraid of this good friend; she loves children."

And, by-and-by, by dint of Mrs. Dixon's coaxing and Mr. Thorn's promises of a speedy return, she consented to release his coat from the tight grasp in which she had held it all through the conversation, and submit herself to Mrs. Dixon's kind offices.

CHAPTER III.

NETTIE'S GOOD-NIGHT.

THE pleasant parlour into which Mr. Thorn led Nettie that afternoon was the prettiest room she had ever seen. The bright carpet and soft lace curtains were beautiful in her eyes; and the wood-fire blazing on the hearth, for the evenings were damp and chilly in that sea-side village, cast a warm glow over all. But the fairest sight there,

the picture on which the child's gaze fixed itself most intently, was the gentle-looking lady who sat before the fire, turning toward her, as she entered the room, a face lighted with a smile as sweet and tender as if she were welcoming her own little one.

"Come to me," she said, stretching out her hand, "for I cannot come to you. So this is the little girl who is to be my messenger and helper? She looks as if she would suit me exactly," and bending her head, she touched her lips to the child's forehead.

If she had struck her, Nettie could not have been more surprised. She looked up in perfect bewilderment, and then, as the sweet face still bent above her, seeming to bless her with its sunny smile, her lip began to quiver, and a great tear rolled slowly down her cheek.

Mrs. Thorn put her arm around her, drawing her close to her side. "We mean to try to make you very happy here," she said. "Will you try to do your part by being very good and helpful?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'll try," said Nettie, earnestly.

"Now come with me," said Mr. Thorn. "I will take you into the kitchen, and Margaret shall teach you some of the lessons you need to learn."

Nettie followed him into the kitchen, where Margaret, the maid-of-all-work, was preparing the supper. She received her very kindly, showed her how to set the table and to make the tea, and then sent her into the sitting-room again to wait upon her new master and mistress.

The table had been placed close by Mrs. Thorn's chair, and Nettie stood near, with a salver in her hand, watching intently lest she might fail in some duty. She was rather awkward at first, but by-and-by she began to understand what was required of her, and when the meal was over Mrs. Thorn told her that she had done very nicely. Margaret came in and showed her how to put everything away in its place, and, when the room was in

order, took her out into the kitchen to give her some supper.

"I guess you'd better go in and see whether Mrs. Thorn wants you again," said Margaret, when the dishes were all washed and set away. "If she don't, you'd best to go to bed. You look tired out."

So Nettie went to the sitting-room door, and, knocking timidly, was told to come in.

"Please, Mr. Thorn, the woman said I was to go to bed if the lady didn't want me any more."

"No, I shall not need your help to-night," said her mistress. "Are you very tired?"

"Yes, a little, ma'am."

She looked worn out. It had been an exciting day for her.

"Then you had better let Margaret take you upstairs. Good-night," and the soft lips touched her face once more. "Now bid Mr. Thorn good-night, and run away to Margaret."

"Nettie," said Mr. Thorn, as she came to his side, "what shall you do when you go upstairs?"

"I'm going to bed," said Nettie.

"Shall you do nothing before you lie down to sleep?"

"I must take these new clothes off me," said she, with a mystified look.

"There is something else for you to do, Nettie. The God of heaven, your Father, has been very good to you to-day. Do you not mean to thank Him?"

"Did the new Father make you bring me here?"

"Yes, He led me to do it."

"Then I'd like to thank Him. I can do it down here just as good, can't I?"

"No; you cannot do it as well here as you can when you are alone. Come here."

He led her to the window, and drawing back the curtain, bade her look up into the sky, now thickly studded with stars.

"Who made that glorious sky, Nettie?"

"I don't know. I thought it had always been there."

"No, it was made."

"Oh, it must have been a big, strong man that made it!" exclaimed Nettie, so astonished by this new idea, that for the moment she forgot her timidity.

"It was no man that formed the sky. It was the great and mighty God. He made the heavens and the earth; He made the moon and the stars and the great sun, the thunders and the lightnings, the stormy winds and the grand and terrible sea."

The child shuddered and drew back; Mr. Thorn's solemn tone startled her.

"I don't like the sea," she said, falteringly. "It makes me afraid."

"It need never make you afraid. The God who formed it is your Father, and He will not suffer the things which He has made to harm His child. But you must remember, my little girl, that although God is your Father, He is also the mighty God of heaven; and you must go to Him to thank Him for His love, not lightly, but feeling that you are coming before a great King. Not that I would have you feel afraid of this holy God; for you have no need to fear Him. His large heart is so full of love for you, that it grieved Him to see the sore trouble you were in, and so He gave you to us that we might comfort you. And He has done far more than this for you. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son, left His home and came down to the earth to die on the cross, that you and I might go to that bright heaven of which I told you. Do you not want to thank the great King for all this?"

"I don't know how," said Nettie, in a trembling voice.

"Shall I thank Him for you?"

She nodded her head, and Mr. Thorn, kneeling beside the chair on which he had been sitting, drew her down beside him. And then the deep voice, so solemn and

earnest, yet so full of tenderness, gave the child into the care and keeping of God. That prayer taught Nettie something as she knelt, awed and still, at his side. The evening before, she had stood on the water's edge, crushed with the weight of her grief and pain, looking up to the sky in search of the new Friend of whom she had just heard. She did not know how to tell Him all that was in her lonely, desolate heart, and all that she could do was to cry out piteously, "O Father! Father!" And on this first evening in her new home, when she had been made to understand that it was God who had sent the blessings which had been given her, although she was ready to thank Him, it was to her only like thanking Mr. Thorn. Her friendless heart had gone out toward this Father; but while she loved His name, she did not hallow it.

Now, as she listened to Mr. Thorn, as he thanked God for His boundless love and mercy to all men, but especially to this lost lamb whom He had found and brought into a safe fold, and then besought Him to bless and defend her, a new feeling crept into her heart.

When Mr. Thorn rose from his knees, she slipped her hand confidingly into his and whispered,—

"Why do you speak so soft, and yet so strong?"

"Because, my child, I was talking to God. We must speak to Him as we do to no living man. We must use His name as we use no other; never speaking it lightly or irreverently, but very solemnly. When God's Son was here upon the earth, He taught us to ask God to hallow His name, to keep it holy. We must never utter it carelessly. We must remember that it is indeed God's *holy* name."

"Yes," said Nettie, very thoughtfully; and then she stood looking silently down upon the floor.

By-and-by she lifted her head again.

"I don't want to thank Him here," she said. "I'd like to go upstairs. And please, may Margaret stay behind? I want to be all by myself."

"Yes ; if you know your way, you may go alone."

Nettie went up to her room, and entering it, closed the door behind her. It was a very cosy little room, and the bed looked soft and inviting as her tired eyes fell on it ; but she did not pause there. She walked to the window which looked out upon the garden, which only the stars were watching now, and, kneeling there, rested her arms upon the window-ledge, and laid her head down upon them.

It was a serious but very peaceful face that looked up to the shining sky. The path her childish feet had travelled had been a hard path. She had found this earth a weary land, but she had also found the shadow of a great rock.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT TO A STRANGER.

"ARE you Mrs. Thorn's little girl?"

Nettie was standing on the porch of the vine-covered cottage, which had now been her home for more than three weeks. She had been sent out to play ; but play, with her, was something different from that which most children understand by the word. The greatest enjoyment of her cheerless childhood had been to creep away to some lonely spot, where no harsh voice nor heavy hand could reach her : and even now, when all her hours were spent in quiet happiness, she passed her play-time in sauntering through the pleasant garden, or in standing on the porch watching the sky.

"Are you Mrs. Thorn's little girl?" repeated the musical voice ; for Nettie had not answered. She had been thinking, with delight, that she was "Mrs. Thorn's little girl ;" for the minister had told her last night, in answer to a timid question as to whether her aunt would ever take her away, that John Allen and his wife had no

further control over her, having signed papers which gave her entirely into his guardianship.

"Yes," she said, when the stranger spoke the second time. And she went down the steps toward the child, who stood on the gravel-walk below.

"Well, I 'm Margery Bray; and I live up there in that white house on the hill, with my aunt."

"Oh, poor little thing!" said Nettie.

Margery opened her eyes very wide.

"Why did you say that?" she asked.

"Didn't you say you lived with your aunt?"

"Yes; but that don't make me a poor little thing."

"Aint you afraid of her?"

"No, indeed I aint," said Margery, with a merry laugh. "She's the best auntie that ever was. She's taken care of me ever since I was a baby. My mother died when I was very small," she added, more gravely.

"So did mine."

"Oh, did she? I 'm so sorry!" and, coming nearer to Nettie, Margery put her arm around her neck.

The child looked at her wonderingly.

"Are you?" said she. "Nobody ever was before, except Mr. and Mrs. Thorn. What makes you sorry?"

"Because I know you want your mother; for I want mine so bad sometimes. But we mustn't fret for them, when they're so happy in heaven."

Nettie did not reply; and, after a moment, Margery said,—

"I almost forgot what I came for. My aunt told me I'd better come over here and ask you to go and play with me at my house. Will you go?"

"If Mrs. Thorn will let me," said Nettie, quite won over by this pleasant little maiden. "Come and ask her."

"Ah, Miss Margery, is this you?" said Mrs. Thorn, as the children entered her room. "Have you come to pay Nettie a visit?"

"No, ma'am. I came to take her home with me, if she

may go," said Margery, leaning against the lady's chair with the freedom of an old acquaintance. "Will you let me take her?"

"Yes, if she wishes to go. How is it, Nettie?"

"I would like it," said Nettie.

"How old are you?" asked Margery, linking her arm in that of her companion, as they started off together. She had taken this new friend into the very recesses of her warm little heart; and they were walking along, side by side, as closely united as if they had known each other for years.

"I'm ten years old."

"Are you? You are older than I. I'm pretty small of my age, too. Father says I'm a tiny mite; but I'm trying to grow big as fast as I can, so as to take care of the house for him;" and Margery drew her slight figure up to its utmost height. "Aunt Annie is to be married, and to go away to England to live, and father says I shall keep house for him when his sister leaves him; so you see that makes me in a hurry to get big."

"I'm so glad," she went on, after skipping along for a while by the side of her silent companion, "I'm so glad that we've both got a mother up in the sky. It ought to make us the realest friends; don't you think so? It's so nice to think about them, and to know that they are looking down and watching their little girls. I wonder, Nettie, if they won't come and open the gates for us when Jesus calls us up to heaven. Oh, won't it be beautiful to have them take us right up in their arms, and kiss us with their bright angel lips? The dear, sweet mothers!"

"There's my Aunt Annie!" she cried out suddenly. "Let's run and meet her!" and, seizing Nettie's hand in hers, she ran fleetly up the hill toward a woman who was spreading clothes on the grass to bleach.

When she heard the patter of the children's feet upon the gravel, she turned toward them with a smile. "You're a

fine pair of ponies," she said pleasantly, as they paused, breathless, at the top of the hill. "Why, you are quite exhausted! Take your friend into the kitchen, Margie, and give her a drink of milk. She looks warm and tired."

Nettie followed Margery into the kitchen, stepping carefully over the freshly-scrubbed floor, for it looked so spotlessly clean that she feared her feet might soil it.

"Sit down in that little chair," said Margery, "while I go to the cellar for the milk. That is my chair, and this is father's—this big one. They always stand close together, because that's the way father and I like to be, always near to each other."

She took a small pitcher out of the closet, and, opening a door at one side of the room, went down a pair of stairs which led into the cellar. Nettie sat still, looking around the kitchen, afraid to move lest the aunt, good-tempered as she looked, should come in and scold her. By-and-by she heard the tread of Margery's feet upon the stairs, and soon her head appeared in the doorway. Just as she stepped over the sill she stumbled forward, and splashed some of the milk from the pitcher upon the floor.

"Oh my! oh my!" exclaimed Nettie, springing up with a face of great alarm; "what will we do? The aunt will see!"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Margery, in astonishment.

"The milk is spilt, and the aunt will be so angry! What can we do?"

"We can wipe it up," said Margery, laughing. "Aunt Annie won't care. Where's the floor-cloth, I wonder? I'll ask her. Aunt An-nie!" she called, standing in the doorway.

"I'm coming," said Aunt Annie.

"I've spilled some milk: where's the floor-cloth?"

"It's hanging on the line; take a clean one from the closet. If you can't reach the shelf, leave it, and I'll attend to it when I come in!" called back a pleasant voice.

"What a nice aunt!" said Nettie, who had listened in silent amazement to this conversation.

"Isn't she a dear?" said Margery, enthusiastically. "But I won't leave it for her to wipe up. I can't reach the shelf, but you can, because you're taller. There, that's the pile—that dark-looking heap of towels. That's right. Now we'll have it all nice and clean when she comes in."

"Now let us go and play," said Margery, when she had carefully cleaned the floor, and they had each drunk a brimming glass of the fresh milk. "What shall we do? Do you like to keep house?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Well, one of us will be the visitor, and the other will be the lady of the house. Let's play we were real ladies, shall we? Fine ladies, I mean. Will you be the mistress of the house, or the visitor?"

"I'll be the visitor," said Nettie, thinking that the easier part.

"Then you must go outside and play ring a bell. You know, in fine ladies' houses they have a bell, and some one to open the door when the bell rings. Now go out and ring."

"Jing-a-ling-a-ling," said Nettie, from without. She was beginning to enter into the pastime with some spirit.

"Pretend that some one let you in," called Margery. "I'm in my parlour, playing on the piano."

Nettie came in, but stood still in surprise when her eyes fell on Margery. She had drawn her little chair in front of her father's, and, with an open hymn-book before her, supported on a huge tin pan which occupied the father's chair, was "playing on the piano."

And there she sat and sang to her visitor, keeping time upon the tin pan, with touches of her quick fingers, to the sweet tunes which warbled from her throat like the music of a bird. Hymn after hymn floated upon the still air,

for Nettie would not let her pause, but sat with eager, listening face, drinking in this new delight. And Aunt Annie, coming in from her work, stood at the open door, watching the two little figures as they sat there with the sunlight falling in upon them through the vines which covered the window, dropping in bits of golden light upon their dresses, hiding in Margery's fair curls, and flecking Nettie's darker hair; Margery lost to all around her in the joyous singing of her happy heart, and Nettie wholly engrossed in the sweetest music her ears had ever heard.

"Oh, that was so nice!" she said, with a long-drawn breath, when, tired at last, Margery closed her book.

"Aint they pretty songs?" said Margery. "I always feel as if I were near to my mother when I sing hymns. There is one that says,—

‘Ye angels who stand round the throne,
And view my Immanuel's face;’

when I sing that it seems as if I was talking right to mother."

"What is Immanuel?" asked Nettie.

"Immanuel? That is another name for our Saviour. You know who He is, don't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Thorn told me."

"Didn't you know before? O poor Nettie! But you know now. Isn't it a beautiful story? And then to think it's all true, and that some day we shall see Him! Don't you wish He'd come down here to see us now,—just us two little girls, all by ourselves? But that's a selfish wish, isn't it? I'd like to have father and Aunt Annie see Him, and Mr. and Mrs. Thorn, and all the poor fisher-people, too. Wouldn't He be kind to them? Just think, Nettie: suppose we should see His shining feet standing there on the floor in that spot of sunlight! Oh, just think!"

She sat on her low seat, leaning forward, with her hands clasped and her eyes fixed on the golden spot, as if she almost expected to see the vision of which she spoke.

But the next moment she lifted her head, and, turning to Nettie with a smile, said, "We didn't play much after all, did we?"

"No; but this was so nice," said Nettie.

By-and-by they had dinner, and then Nettie saw Margery's father. He looked a little like Aunt Annie, and spoke so kindly to his young visitor that she began to wonder whether every one in the world, except her uncle and his family, was kind and good like the great God whom she had learned to love so much.

After dinner, Nettie said that she must go home. So Margery put on her hat, and walked over with her, and they parted at Mr. Thorn's gate, the closest and firmest of friends.

CHAPTER V.

THOUGHTLESS HARRY.

"NETTIE," said Mrs. Thorn, one morning, as the child sat beside her patiently trying to make a neat seam in a piece of work which had been given her to do, "my nephew, Harry Gray, is coming to spend the day with us."

"Is he, ma'am?" She spoke very quietly; but the colour flushed painfully over her face and neck.

"You don't look very well pleased," said Mrs. Thorn. "Don't you like boys?"

"No, ma'am," replied Nettie, her thoughts going back to the persecution which she had endured at the hands of her cousins.

"Perhaps you will like Harry better than other boys whom you may have seen. He is a very pleasant fellow.

But if you wish to do so you may go for Margery, and bring her down to help you to entertain him."

"That would do," said Nettie. "Shall I go now, Mrs. Thorn?"

"When your work is done. You will have plenty of time to finish it before Harry comes."

The two children had seen a great deal of one another since Nettie's first visit to Margery, and the shy little girl had lost all fear of Aunt Annie; so that on this morning, when she reached the house and found only the aunt in sight, she did not run away, as she would have done some time before, but walked boldly into the kitchen, and held up her face for a kiss as naturally as Margery herself would have done. Aunt Annie readily gave her permission to take Margery with her, and sent her to the back-yard to find her friend, who had gone out to feed the chickens. Nettie found her engaged in driving away the larger fowls from a brood of young chickens, and no persuasions could move her from her post until her pets had satisfied their hunger; but when they had finished their meal she gladly consented to go with her, and help her to take care of the dreaded playmate.

Harry Gray had already arrived when they reached the cottage, and he greeted the visitor as an old acquaintance.

"Hallo, Margery! is that you? Come on, let's have some fun. Why, who have you got here?"

"This is Nettie Allen. Didn't you know she was living here?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot. Aunt Fannie told me about her—poor little girl!"

Nettie gazed at him in amazement. The merry, laughing face had sobered in a moment. No tender-hearted girl could have looked at her with more pity and sympathy. This boy was of a different make from those with whom she had had to do.

"Never mind," said he, coming toward her; "we'll

take good care of you now. What mean folks your people must be !”

“ Don’t let us talk about that,” said Margery. “ Come and play.”

“ I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” said Harry ; “ we’ll go down to the shore and ——”

“ Oh, no !” interrupted Nettie ; “ don’t go to the shore : I can’t bear the sea !”

She had never been to the beach since she left her old home. No persuasions could induce her to walk there, and she never spoke of the sea unless forced to it, as in this case. Mr. Thorn often took her with him on his rambles ; but she would never consent to go, unless he promised to avoid the shore ; and her dread of any approach to it was so great that he finally desisted from the attempt to overcome her fears.

“ Nettie don’t like to meet those people,” said Margery, in explanation, as Harry looked up rather surprised by her vehemence. “ We’ll stay here. Let’s make mud pies.”

This proposition met with Harry’s hearty approval ; and, in a few moments, the three pairs of hands were deep in the mysteries of that art which all children so delight in.

“ We’ll play we’re poor people,” said Harry. “ We’ll pretend we had to make mud pies for our living.”

“ How poor shall we be ?” asked Margery. “ Very miserable indeed ?”

“ Oh, no ! about as poor as you are.”

“ Why, we aint poor ! My father has heaps of things.”

“ Has he ?” said Harry. He was the son of the only wealthy man in the village, and he thought that Thomas Bray the painter, who lived in a one-story cottage, must be quite a poor man. “ What has he got ?”

“ Why, he’s got lots of paint-pots and brushes, and a cow, and ever so many chickens, and plenty of things beside !”

“ Oh, I don’t call that rich,” said Harry ; “ but it don’t

make any difference. We can have just as good times playing with mud if we aint rich. There comes Uncle Phil; we'll make him buy some."

Mr. Thorn bought some pies, paying for them with the brightest of pennies; at which Margery demurred, saying that it was not fair for him to give real money for his own mud. But he said that he was only paying for the labour; and then, telling them that it was dinner-time, led them into the house and sent them to wash away the remnants of pie-making before the bell should ring.

After dinner they went out once more, but were soon driven in-doors by a sudden shower which had gathered while they were in the house, and Nettie proposed that they should make a visit to Margaret. Margaret welcomed the girls, but told Harry that she did not allow boys in her kitchen, and threatened to pin a dish-cloth to his jacket; and, when he insisted on remaining, stole softly behind and fastened a long towel on him. But Harry's feelings were so much hurt by this insult that she had to make up for it by promising to let him butter the patty-pans for some cake which she was about to mix.

Meantime the storm was growing more and more violent, threatening to keep them in all the afternoon. The girls placed themselves at the window to watch the pouring rain; while Harry, with his sleeves rolled up, and his bright eyes dancing with enjoyment, stood at the table beside Margaret, diligently rubbing the butter over the pans, and handing them to her to be filled.

"Oh, wasn't that a rare one!" exclaimed Harry, as a loud peal of thunder broke over their heads.

No one spoke, but Margery glanced quickly toward him, with a pained look on her face. Another and another peal followed, until, at last, there came a crash which seemed to shake the house to its foundations.

"Hallo, Thunder, don't break the house down!" said Harry, turning from his work to look out at the storm.

"O Harry, don't!" exclaimed Margery.

"What's the matter?" asked Harry, rather startled by her face of distress.

"It's very wrong to speak so. Don't you know it is God's thunder? You are taking His name in vain."

"Oh, I didn't!" said Harry, distressed in his turn. "I didn't say His name at all."

"But you spoke so carelessly to the thunder, and the thunder is God's voice—the Bible says so!"

"I never thought of that," said Harry, soberly. "I'm sorry I said it."

"It seems to me as if we ought to be real still in a storm like this," said the little girl. "When God speaks so loud I think He means us to listen."

Toward evening the thunder-storm quieted down into a steady rain, and when Mr. Bray came for his child, Mrs. Thorn begged him to let her keep her all night, saying that Harry was storm-stayed, and that she had promised the children that their party should not be broken up.

They spent a very pleasant evening, playing games, and listening to stories, of which Mr. Thorn appeared to possess a boundless store. Just before prayer-time he told them that they might each choose the Bible verse they liked best, and tell why they loved it.

"I know what my verse will be for this night," said Margery. "I don't know where to find it, but it says, 'The Lord of glory thundereth.'"

"Why did you choose that verse, Margie?" asked Mrs. Thorn.

"Because I think it's so nice, when you hear that awful noise, to know it is God. It makes me think of one day long ago. Aunt Annie was out, and I heard a great noise up in the loft when I thought I was all alone in the house, and I was so frightened I screamed; and father's voice called out, 'Don't be afraid, little Margie; it's only father.' And now, when it thunders very loud, it always seems as if

I heard God say, 'Don't be afraid, little Margie; it's only Father;' and I don't feel a bit frightened. Don't you think it's a real nice verse?"

"Yes, dear, I do indeed," said Mrs. Thorn. "What is your verse, Harry?"

"It is in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew,—'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' I like it because it makes me think of Aunt Fannie. If we could look right into her heart, I'm sure we'd see that it was just as pure and lovely as her face: wouldn't we, Uncle Phil?"

The affectionate boy was so thoroughly in earnest that Mr. Thorn could not smile at his enthusiasm. He simply said "Yes," quite gravely; while Aunt Fannie's soft hand stroked the little fellow's curly head, which rested against her shoulder as he sat beside her.

"And what verse do you love, Nettie?"

"One you read at prayers this morning,—'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

"Do you know what that means?"

"Yes, I think so. Doesn't it mean, that if we let other people see that we are trying to do as God wants to have us, that it will coax them to try, too? If we show them that we glorify His name, perhaps they will, too."

"What do you mean by glorify His name?"

"Keep it holy; hallow it, as the prayer says."

She had learned a great deal since she had lived in this new atmosphere of love and kindness. Once released from the spell of fear which had bound her, her naturally quick and intelligent mind had seized on all that had been put within its reach, and her warm heart had gone out in its strength to meet the love which had been revealed to it. She did not know that she was a Christian; but she loved God with her whole soul, and strove to serve Him with all her strength; and our dear Father asks no more of His children.

When they had finished their talk about the verses, Mr. Thorn read a chapter from the Bible, and then they all knelt together while he gave them into God's loving care for the night. The two girls were to sleep in Nettie's bed, while Harry occupied a room on the opposite side of the hall.

"O Harry, Harry, do come here!" cried Margery, after he had parted from them at the head of the stairs.

He came running into the room in answer to her call.

"Just look at the moon! Isn't it lovely?"

The rain had ceased, and the moon, breaking through the heavy masses of clouds, shone out gloriously, touching their dark edges with silver light, and scattering them before her as she rode proudly in the tempestuous sky.

"Isn't she splendid?" said Harry. "I don't see her from my room."

"No; that is why I called you."

"Well," said Harry, with a long yawn, tiring of the picture before the girls were half satisfied, "I guess I'll go to bed. I'm sleepy. I've half a mind to say my prayers in here, it's so hot in my room. I guess I will, too;" and he threw himself on his knees beside the bed.

The two girls looked at one another in dismay.

"O Margery," whispered Nettie, "I should think he'd be afraid."

"So should I. I wonder what he says. He surely can't say, 'Hallowed be thy name,' for father says it is blasphemy to say it carelessly, and I know Harry wouldn't blaspheme."

"What are you saying about Harry?" asked the boy, springing up again as suddenly as he had knelt down.

"O Harry, dear, what dreadful kind of prayers!" said Margery.

"What do you mean?" asked he, in surprise.

"I should think you'd be afraid to speak to God so."

"Why, I said them right enough," said Harry. "I did not stare about, nor do anything."

"But you didn't seem to think it," said little Margery. "It was just like what you said about the thunder. It frightens me to see you do so. It's real wicked, Harry. Indeed, indeed it is;" and the quiver in her voice told him how deeply she felt what she said, while Nettie looked on as much troubled as she, but less ready with words to express her feelings.

"I'm sorry," said Harry, quite disturbed by their unhappiness. "I didn't mean anything wrong; I'll be more careful another time. Good-night—don't you fret, Margery. I'm sorry I bothered you."

"O Nettie, I don't believe he loves God one bit," said Margery, sadly. "If he did, he wouldn't only mind fretting us; he'd be thinking how he'd grieved Him. Let's ask God to forgive him."

Hand-in-hand they knelt together in the moonlight, the soft rays falling like a glory upon their earnest, upturned faces, as they prayed the great Father to forgive their generous-hearted but thoughtless playmate.

CHAPTER VI.

NETTIE'S LOVE TESTED.

THE morning sun rose brightly on the freshened earth, sparkling in the rain-drops which hung on every leaf and every blade of grass, until it seemed as if trees and fields were set in diamonds.

Harry left the cottage quite early, in order to be at home to meet his tutor at nine o'clock; but Margery waited until Nettie had attended to all her morning duties, and then bade Mrs. Thorn good-by; Nettie setting out to walk

a part of the way home with her. She had nearly reached the house again on her return, when she saw Mr. Thorn coming up the shore-road, which branched off from that on which she was walking. He beckoned her to him, and she ran down to meet him.

"Where have you been?" he asked, as she gained his side.

"I went a little way with Margery. It was so lonely for her to go by herself."

"You love her very much — don't you, Nettie?"

"Oh, yes, very much indeed!"

"Let me see — how long have you known each other?"

"A good long while. She came here when I'd lived with you only two or three weeks."

"That was in April; now it is September — nearly six months."

"It has been such a happy, happy time," said Nettie, slipping her hand into his.

"Yes, it has been a great change for you in every way. Nettie, I have just come from your old home. They are not very happy there; your aunt is very ill."

"What's the matter with her, Mr. Thorn?"

"I cannot tell. I saw her last week, and she complained then of headache and great weariness. To-day I was visiting a woman who lives near her, and she told me that she was very sick; so I called to see her, and found her in a miserable condition."

"Who takes care of her?" asked Nettie. "The boys?"

"No. There was no one with her. The women go in once in a while to see if she needs anything; but she is not liked on the shore, and no one takes much notice of her. Your uncle is out with the boat this morning, and the two elder boys are with him. The younger boys were playing on the beach, and I tried to persuade them to go in and attend to their mother, but they would not listen to me. She was quite alone when I saw her, and was crying out

piteously for water. I gave her a little in a glass, and she drank it eagerly, poor thing. She must have suffered for it, for her lips were parched and dry, and she seemed almost choking with thirst."

She made no answer, and they walked on in silence until they reached the gate.

"Mr. Thorn," said Nettie, as he held the gate open for her to pass through, "did Aunt Susan say anything about me?"

She spoke falteringly, with something of the old frightened manner, which she had quite lost of late.

"Not to-day. She was quite delirious, and did not know me. But when I last saw her she asked me how you were doing; and I told her we hoped that our little Nettie was a Christian."

"Did you?" and her face lighted instantly. "What did she say?"

"She did not answer kindly. She told me that she did not believe your religion would do you any good."

"Oh, that wasn't right! God can make even me better. Can't He, Mr. Thorn?"

"Yes; but your aunt knows very little about God."

Mrs. Thorn had never seen Nettie so restless as she appeared that afternoon. She wandered about the room without any apparent object; took up her sewing for a few moments, and then laid it aside; brought out her books as if to study, and then put them away without opening them; and finally went out of the house; and Mrs. Thorn saw her from the window pacing up and down the gravelled walk, with her head bent forward as if thinking deeply. After supper she was as uneasy as she had been through the afternoon, and when she sat down to study, as was her custom after tea, Mrs. Thorn noticed that, although her book lay open before her, her eyes were fixed on vacancy.

"You had better lay your books aside, Nettie," she said.

"You seem to feel too restless to study to-night. Bring that dress which you were making for Margery's doll, and I will show you how to trim it."

Nettie obeyed, but even the doll's dress failed to interest her, and in a few moments her hands lay idly in her lap, while she sat gazing into the fire, lost in thought again. So the evening passed away until Mr. Thorn roused her from her reverie by telling her that it was prayer-time, and sending her to bring the Bible. As she placed it on the table beside him she said, timidly,—

"Mr. Thorn, if I should go to Aunt Susan and take care of her till she is better, would that be letting my light shine so that she would glorify God?"

"It would indeed be letting your light shine, my child. Do you want to go to her, Nettie?"

"Oh, no, I don't want to, but I thought perhaps it was right. Only—only—oh, I'm so afraid to go!" and she turned her face away, vainly trying to control the tears which choked her voice.

"You must not go if it is too hard a trial for you. You must think it over seriously, and then decide."

He put his arm around her, and kept her beside him until she grew quiet again, and then sent her to call Margaret to prayers.

Mr. Thorn always closed the family service with the Lord's Prayer, in which all joined, Nettie's clear voice rising distinctly above Mrs. Thorn's low tones and Margaret's faint murmur. "To-night, as usual, the young voice repeated the holy words, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed——" But there it fell so suddenly, that, involuntarily, they all paused with it. For an instant there was silence in the room, but only for an instant; the next, Nettie had taken up the petition where she had left it, and without waiting for Mr. Thorn she repeated, firmly, "Hallowed be Thy name," and the prayer was concluded as usual.

When they rose from their knees Nettie leaned over the arm of her mistress's chair, and said, "Mrs. Thorn, could you spare me for a little while, and let me go to Aunt Susan?"

Mrs. Thorn looked at her. Her face was very pale, but very steadfast.

"You are undertaking a great task, Nettie," she said. "You must count the cost before you attempt it. You will have much to bear, and, probably, no thanks for your self-denial."

"I know it will be very hard, but won't the dear Father in heaven help me? Aunt Susan doesn't love Him now, but perhaps when she sees that He can make such a naughty, wicked girl as I was, kind and gentle to her, she will learn to love Him too. Don't you think, perhaps, she will?"

"I hope so, most earnestly, dear. But, Nettie, it seems almost too much for you."

"No, it won't be too much, Mrs. Thorn. I won't be so afraid when I'm used to thinking about it; and I'd be so glad to glorify His name. Please to let me go."

"You shall do just as you think right. You do not wish to go to-night?"

"Oh, no!" and Nettie's face grew even paler than before. "I don't think I could begin in the dark night, when the sea roars so; but in the morning I'll go down and try to help her, and to make her more comfortable."

And then she bade them good-night, and went away to her little room, quiet and composed, the restlessness and uneasiness all gone.

CHAPTER VII.

DOWN ON THE SHORE.

MRS. THORN had thought it more than probable that by morning Nettie might falter in her suddenly-formed determination, and she waited somewhat anxiously for the result. But when Nettie came into her room to aid her to dress, she saw at a glance that her purpose had not changed. There was no sign of indecision in that quiet, resolved face; and when she asked her if she still thought it best to go to her aunt she said, "I ought not to stay here now, dear Mrs. Thorn; indeed I ought not," so earnestly, that there could be no doubt as to her determination.

All her duties were attended to with great care, and Mrs. Thorn could not but feel touched to see with what loving thoughtfulness she tried to arrange the room so that everything which her helpless mistress might need should be within her reach, that she might miss her as little as possible. And after all was done she came and sat down in her usual seat beside the invalid's chair.

"I suppose it is time to go now," she said; "but I'd like to sit here for a few minutes, if I may."

"Yes, dear; you had better wait until Mr. Thorn comes in. He is going down with you."

"Is he? Oh, I won't be nearly so much afraid now."

It was not long before Mr. Thorn came back, and Nettie went to bring her hat and the basket of comforts which Margaret had packed for her. That walk was a very pleasant one to her, in spite of her inability to forget what its end was to be. With her hand held fast in Mr. Thorn's, and his kind voice speaking words which cheered and strengthened her for her hard task, she went on very

happily, and it was not until she came in sight of the house, which she had not once seen since she left it, that her heart began to fail her.

So far as his being of any service to her in the meeting with her aunt and cousins was concerned, Mr. Thorn's walk to the shore was of no avail. None of the boys were to be seen, except poor Jack, the youngest, who stood beside the wretched bed on which his mother lay, crying out between his sobs, "O mamma! mamma!" in a piteous wail, of which the unconscious mother took no notice.

It was a miserable sight—the untidy room; the comfortless bed, tumbled and disordered by the sick woman's tossing; the child, with his tear-stained face, and his bosom heaving with sobs; and, worse than all, the poor sufferer, moaning and muttering in delirium, lying there in the desolate place, friendless and alone, save for the little helpless child.

"Oh, I'm glad I came," said Nettie. "I can make her a great deal more comfortable than this. And poor Jack, too! Don't you know Nettie, Jack?"

The boy stood and stared at her for a moment, and then, with a joyous cry, flung himself into her arms. He was not an attractive child. He had inherited his mother's hard, sharp features, and his temper had been ruined by alternate indulgence and tyranny; but still he was something to love and care for, and Nettie held him closely to her, and called him her dear boy, and kissed and fondled him, until the poor little fellow began to feel that he was not all alone in the world, after all: and Nettie, happy in the thought that some one in the wretched place was glad to see her, hoped that her task might be less heavy than she had feared.

But when the time came for Mr. Thorn to leave her she began to tremble. All her old terror of the sea and dread of her aunt and cousins seemed to return upon her with

new force ; and she clung so tightly to his hand, that he began to fear that he had done wrong in bringing her back.

"It is not too late yet, Nettie," he said, gently. "Shall I take you home with me again?"

"No; I will stay here. But, dear Mr. Thorn, don't leave me alone very long,—will you? Come to see me as often as you can."

"I shall come down every day while you are here," he said, kindly.

"Oh, I shall be so glad if you could! But that would take too much time. You could not do that."

"I can spare the time when it is to comfort my little daughter."

He had never called her by that name before; and when he bent and kissed her forehead, asking God to keep her in His tenderest care, Nettie felt as if she should never fear again.

His "little daughter!" She said the words over to herself again and again, as she went back into the house after watching him out of sight; and they rang like sweet-toned bells in the air, as she set about the almost hopeless task of making the room look neat and tidy.

Mrs. Thorn had given her some instructions before she left home, and she proceeded to carry them out at once. First, she took a towel and wash-cloth from the basket which Mr. Thorn had carried down for her, and, bringing some fresh water in a basin, began to wash the flushed face which rested on the pillow. The sick woman ceased to toss and moan when she felt the cool water upon her fevered cheek, and, opening her eyes, looked at Nettie with a vague, troubled air.

"Who is it?" she asked, uneasily.

"It is Nettie, Aunt Susan," said the child, trying hard to keep her voice steady.

"Nettie? Nettie has gone away," said her aunt; and,

after looking at her for another moment, she shook her head, as if she could not comprehend, and closing her eyes, began to mutter, as she had done before.

Just then, to Nettie's great relief, a woman came in. Mr. Thorn had stopped at her house on his way home to ask her to go to the little girl's assistance, and she had readily consented. Nettie recognized her at once, for she had often spoken kindly to the child in her friendless days, and now she proved herself a very willing helper. Her strong arms were quite able to lift the sick woman from one side of the bed to the other, while Nettie changed the soiled sheets for pure, fresh linen, and put clean cases on the heated pillows. And when Mrs. Allen was neatly and comfortably arranged, the good-natured neighbour said that she would put the room in order while Nettie washed and dressed her little cousin.

She was almost afraid to undertake this task; for, in days gone by, Jack had always rebelled fiercely against any cleansing process, and any attempt on her part to make him fit to be seen had been met by blows and cries, which brought his mother to punish his tormentor, even when the work had been done by her own order. But to-day he stood quietly beside her, allowing her to use soap and water to her heart's content, and to dress him in a clean frock, which she found in a bureau-drawer. And when all was done, and she had bidden Mrs. Moore good-night, thanking her for her kindness, she sat down before the fire, with Jack on her lap, almost happy.

The appearance of the room did no violence to the ideas of neatness and order which, for the past five months, had been carefully instilled into her mind. The floor was clean; the fire burned brightly on the hearth, bringing a glow to her own face and to that of the child upon her knee; and the whole room had an air of comfort and peace strangely at variance with its morning aspect.

Nettie could not help hoping that, when her uncle and

cousins came in, the welcome of this brightened home might soften their hearts toward her. If it had not been for the roaring of the sea, and for the dread of meeting those rough, hard-hearted boys, she would have been quite content; but she could not readily conquer her old fears. She tried her best to forget them, and sang all the sweet hymns which she had learned, over and over, to drive them out of her mind, until, lulled by the music, Jack fell asleep in her arms.

And then she sat and watched the fading light, and saw the stars come peeping out, one by one, like little messengers sent from God to point His children to their Father's home. And the trembling heart grew still, and, looking upward, waited, trusting all to that Father's love.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMING HOME.

THE evening closed in cold and windy, and the world wore a very dreary look to John Allen, as he steered his boat into the cove, and prepared to walk up to his desolate home. The summer had been an unsuccessful season for him, and he felt quite unprepared for the winter which this chilly evening heralded. His heart was heavy as he thought of his sick wife lying in that cold hut, unattended and uncared for, neglected by her children, and without a friend to look to in his necessary absence. He was not very tender with her in their daily life, but that morning, when he had left her, his thoughts had gone back to the time when he had taken her from her father's house, a young, bright-eyed bride, and his heart had been touched as he thought of the change which a hard life had wrought in her.

To-night, with anxiety pressing hard upon him, and the discomfort and weariness of his life more than usually apparent to him, he was very irritable with his boys, the two oldest of whom had been with him all day, and the whole party had come on shore in a very unenviable frame of mind.

"What are you leaving that sail there for, Sam?" he said, as his sons turned toward home, leaving the sail in the boat.

"I aint a-goin' to carry up the heavy thing every night," said the boy, sulkily. "Let Jim take it."

"Carry it yourself, or ——" and, without finishing his sentence, the father moved forward with a look and gesture which warned Sam that it was safer to obey.

With a mutter of discontent he lifted the sail, rudely ordering his younger brother to assist him; and, bearing the burden between them, they walked away.

John Allen followed them, carrying a basket of fish. As he passed along he noticed a hut, apparently in the vicinity of his own home, from the windows of which there fell across the sands the ruddy glow of a blazing fire, suggesting thoughts of rest and comfort, which made him wish, with a sigh, that such a welcome awaited him. As he drew nearer his steps quickened. Surely that light came from his own hut!—was it a-fire? Startled by the thought he hastily ran on, but when he reached his home he stood still in surprise. Looking through the window he saw a clean, bright room, in one corner of which, upon a smoothly-spread bed, lay his wife; while before the fire there sat a little girl rocking his sleeping boy upon her lap. He entered quietly, and stood with the door open in his hand, too much surprised to speak.

"It's only me, uncle—only Nettie. Please shut the door; it blows too cold on Aunt Susan."

"It blows too cold on Aunt Susan!" he repeated, obeying her request. "There was a time when you would

have been glad to see her cold in her grave. But what brought you here, child?"

"Mr. Thorn told me aunt was sick, and I came to tend her."

"Did he bid you to come?"

"No; but he said that she had no one to take care of her: so I will stay until she is better."

"After all her hard blows and worse words?" said John Allen, looking at her as if she were something hard to be understood. "Why, what has come to you, child?"

"Jesus has come," said Nettie, softly. "He has come and taken those naughty, wicked feelings out of my heart, and has made me more kind and gentle. That is what has come to me, Uncle John."

He did not answer, but, as he lifted Jack from her lap, Nettie saw a great tear drop upon the child's sleeping face.

When the boys came in they were as much surprised as their father had been to find Nettie re-established in her old place. They took but little notice of her, however, their time being wholly occupied in quarrelling among themselves; and even when they sat down to the supper which she had prepared for them, no one thanked her for the trouble which she had taken. But as they were leaving her for the night Ben came back to say,—

"Good-night, Nettie. If you want anything you can holler for me."

The thought of offering to watch with his mother did not seem to enter his mind, and yet Nettie rejoiced to hear him say even those few words, for she knew that six months before he would not have made that offer, nor have bidden her good-night, and she thanked him as warmly as if the debt of gratitude had been all on her side. Her uncle had insisted upon sitting up while she went to bed; but he looked so utterly wearied out that Nettie was afraid that he might fall asleep at his post, and she dared not leave

him to watch alone. It was not long before her fears were realized; the tired man's head fell back against his chair, and he soon sank into a heavy slumber.

During the early part of the night Mrs. Allen lay, as she had done all day, muttering incoherently, but comparatively quiet; but as the hours passed on her fever grew higher, and she became more and more restless, until, frightened by her loud exclamations and violent gestures, Nettie roused her uncle, whose deep sleep had been undisturbed by his wife's outcries. The remainder of the night was terrible to Nettie, wholly unaccustomed as she was to a sick-bed. The elder boys had to be called up to aid their father in holding their mother down in the bed; and when, toward morning, the child crept into the little inner room to lie down beside Jack, she was too much excited, and too weary, to sleep.

The loft which the younger boys occupied was above her, and she could hear their voices as they talked, for they too had been wakened by the noise and confusion.

"I say, Ben," said Martin, "what do you guess put it into Nettie's head to come and look after mother? She used to hate her; and a good right she had, too."

"Yes, I know she did. I asked father what she was up to, and he said she told him that God had made her love mother, or something like that. That's a big story, aint it?"

"Yes: but something's made a big change in her, and no mistake. Don't you remember one time when Jim was sick, and mother wanted her to sit up with him? She declared she'd die first, and she wished he'd die, and all that. Don't you remember how she went on, and how mother punished her?"

"It's queer," said Martin. "But, anyway, I wish she'd stay if she's goin' to keep things so decent. I wonder if she got all these new notions from the minister?"

"No, not from the minister," thought Nettie, as the

boys ceased talking, and she tried to compose herself to sleep. "Not from the minister." He who had put all these new feelings into her heart was close beside her now; not far away, as Mr. Thorn was. His strong arm was about her, His loving hand beneath her head, His gentle voice whispering in her ear, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." The tired head sank back, the heavy eyelids closed, and those tender words, "So He giveth His beloved sleep," were fulfilled to His little one.

CHAPTER IX.

WATCHING AND WAITING.

THE breakfast next morning was quite a peaceable meal. Even Sam, the wildest of all the boys, had been awed and sobered by the scene of the past night, and there was an unusual tranquillity in the house.

Nettie had hoped that her uncle might remain at home to help her in the care of his wife; but as soon as he had eaten his breakfast he put on a pea-jacket, and, taking up his hat, told her that it was time for him to go.

"I'll run up to the village first, and send the doctor down," he said. "It's lonesome for you here I know, child; but it's a good day for fishing, and I've had such poor luck this season that I must do all I can now, else I'd stay with you. I'd bid one of the boys bide at home if I thought it would do any good; but they'd be off the minute my back was turned."

"Never mind," said Nettie, who knew by experience what the result of such an order would be. "Aunt is pretty quiet in the daytime."

"Yes; she's mostly so wild at night. I'll ask some of

the neighbour-women to look in on you once in a while. Good-by."

"Good-by, Uncle John," and Nettie turned back into the house.

The four boys were still standing around the table, where she had left them, the two eldest preparing to go out with their father, and Ben and Martin talking over some plan of amusement. Nettie looked wistfully at Ben; he caught the look, and guessed its meaning instantly. Nothing could have made him confess that the strange and unaccountable change in Nettie had touched and softened him, nor that he pitied and wanted to help her; but, nevertheless, he began at once to try to think of some reason for giving up the excursion which he had planned to take.

"I say, Martin," he exclaimed, as if a thought had suddenly struck him, "I can't go to-day, after all. Father told me to mend that net yesterday; and I forgot it. I shall have to do it to-day."

"Oh, no. Leave the old thing alone, and come on."

Nettie listened eagerly for Ben's answer.

"No, I can't. If he comes home to-night and finds it not mended, he'll cane me, I know."

After a little more discussion the excursion was postponed; and, to Nettie's great relief, Ben went up into the loft for the broken net.

When the house was put in order she sat down on the door-sill, in the sunshine, with her work; for there she could both watch her aunt and look up and down the sands, from time to time, to catch the first glimpse of the face she longed to see. Ben was within call; but he had gone down to the water lest Martin might suspect that he had remained at home for Nettie's sake; and as he had taken Jack with him, she was very lonely. The doctor had come, had shaken his head and looked very grave

when he saw her aunt, and, leaving some medicine, had gone away again ; and that serious face was the only one which Nettie had seen since early morning.

"Water ! water !" gasped a faint voice, as she sat there waiting.

She sprang up quickly, and, raising her aunt's head, gave her a drink. As she turned from the bed, after smoothing the pillows and laying a wet cloth on the burning forehead, a shadow darkened the doorway, and, looking up, Nettie saw Mr. Thorn. She was beside him in an instant.

"Oh, I am so glad !" she said, eagerly. "I began to think you would not come."

"What ! after I had promised ? You faithless little girl ! what shall I do to you ?"

She did not care what he did, so that he did not leave her ; and when she had told him all that had happened, and he put his arm around her and called her his little Florence Nightingale, she felt repaid for what she had done. He could do nothing for Mrs. Allen. She did not know him, and made no answer when he spoke to her ; so he sat down in the window, and, drawing Nettie to his side, gave her all the loving messages which Mrs. Thorn had sent to her. That visit did Nettie a world of good ; and when he left, promising to return on the morrow, she bade him give her best love to Mrs. Thorn, and tell her that she was quite content and happy.

But as day after day passed on Nettie grew very tired ; and, oftentimes, her patience was sorely tried by the boys' rudeness and want of consideration. Mr. Thorn had suggested to her, on the second day, that she should come home at night, fearing that her own strength might give way ; but this she had steadily refused to do ; and as her uncle did not allow her to sit up after the first night, Mr. Thorn had not pressed the point, thinking it best to let her decide for herself. But even he, although Nettie poured

many of her troubles into his sympathizing ear, never knew how much she had to bear. Only the dear, heavenly Father, for whose sake she bore it all, knew what that heart suffered, day by day, for love of Him.

One day the doctor came in, as usual, to see his patient; but he did not, as was his custom, leave immediately. He sat down at the bedside, with his fingers on the sick woman's wrist, anxiously watching her face. By-and-by he rose, and, telling Nettie that the house must be kept perfectly silent, led Jack out upon the sands, and bade Ben, who was loitering there, to take care of him; adding, in a grave tone,—

“You will do well to think of your mother's comfort, to-day at least. I think that she is dying.”

Startled by the doctor's manner, as well as by his words, Ben led Jack down behind the rocks, and Nettie was left in the house with her aunt. But she was not long alone. The physician had called at Mrs. Moore's to ask her to go down to Allen's hut; and, when she reached it, she found Mr. Thorn already there. Soon the doctor returned and bent over the bed again.

“Can nothing save her?” asked Mr. Thorn, in a low voice.

“Nothing but God's almighty power. I can do no more.”

And then they sat and waited silently. There was not a sound in the room save the loud tick of the eight-day clock, and the heavy, laboured breathing of the suffering woman. By-and-by Mr. Thorn rose, and, touching the doctor on the shoulder, went out. After a moment he beckoned to Mrs. Moore, and Nettie was left alone once more. As she sat there, praying silently but most earnestly that God would teach her aunt to love Him before she died, she heard a slight rustle, and, turning toward the bed, saw that Mrs. Allen's eyes were open. Her lips moved, and, going close to her, Nettie bent her head to listen.

"Who is it?" whispered the feeble voice.

"It is Nettie, Aunt Susan."

"No; that voice is too gentle, and the eyes are too soft. It can't be Nettie."

"Never mind it now, auntie. Let me call the doctor."

He came, and his face brightened when he saw his patient.

"This is better than I had hoped," he said, joyfully. "The worst is over; if she has good nursing she may recover, by God's blessing. Mr. Thorn, I think we must thank our little girl for this."

Nettie looked up quickly.

"I mean what I say," said the doctor, who had led her to the door, in order that their voices might not disturb the sick woman. "If your aunt had been left to such poor care as she had before you came here, she would have been dead long before this."

"What do you say to that, Nettie?" said Mr. Thorn, laying his hand tenderly upon her hair.

She did not say anything. She only looked up into the clear blue sky, clasping her hands very tightly together. The words that her joyous, happy heart spoke were for no mortal ear to hear. They saw the dark eyes kindle, and the pale cheek flush; but only God heard the low-breathed words of glad thanksgiving.

"And now, my dear," said the doctor, after a long pause, "I have something to say. You must not be so constantly with Mrs. Allen. The next thing will be that I shall have to nurse you through a fever. You must go home with Mr. Thorn. You may spend your days here, but you must not remain at night."

"But who will take care of aunt, and get the boys' breakfast and supper?"

"The boys may attend to their own meals. We have talked the matter over, and Mrs. Moore has promised to stay here at night until it is safe to leave your aunt. Isn't

that so, Mrs. Moore?" he asked, as she came toward them.

"Yes, sir. I'm more than willing to help the child, I'm sure. It's very hard for me to free myself of the young ones of a morning; but my man can look after them nights, and I'm ready to do my part for the poor body. She used to anger me sore with her sharp tongue; but she's quiet enough now, poor thing. I'd do anything I could for the little lass. She's given all us fisher-folk a good lesson, Mr. Thorn."

"I think that she has taught us all a lesson," said Mr. Thorn, stroking the head which leaned against him. "Now, Nettie, Mrs. Moore will stay here until your uncle comes home, so we will go at once."

She was very glad to go, when she found that everything had been so nicely arranged for her. Her aunt had fallen into a soft sleep; and, giving Mrs. Moore a message for her uncle, she went joyfully homeward.

Never was there a happier little girl than the quiet child who sat that evening on a low stool, with her weary head resting against Mrs. Thorn's knee. It was so still and peaceful in that bright pleasant room, with no one near but these two precious friends, whose love was such a blessing to her, and that other Friend, more precious still, for whose dear sake she had endured so much.

CHAPTER X.

"MY LITTLE DAUGHTER."

MORNING after morning, for many days, Nettie might have been seen walking briskly down the shore-road, always with a basket upon her arm, toward John Allen's hut. Margery Bray protested earnestly against this arrangement,

by which her playmate was taken so entirely from her ; but Nettie was not to be moved.

"I want you even more than you want me, Margie," she would say ; "but I must go." And no amount of persuasion could induce her to remain at home, unless she was needed by Mrs. Thorn.

It was no easy task which she had taken upon herself. As strength returned, Aunt Susan became very irritable and exacting, and Nettie's patience was sorely tried. On some days it seemed as if everything that she did was wrong. The broth was either too hot or too cold, too thin or too thick ; if she tried to make Jack mind what she told him, she was called hard and cross ; if she let him have his own way, she was told that she spoiled him ; until, at last, she almost gave up the hope of winning her aunt by love and kindness : for Nettie did not know that poor Aunt Susan was only trying to hide the better feelings which were struggling for the mastery in her heart—feelings which were daily gaining strength and power, but which she was too proud to confess.

But after a time there came a change in this weary, monotonous life. Mrs. Thorn had been growing more and more feeble as the colder weather came on, and the doctor advised her husband to try what the soft southern air would do for her. The plan was scarcely thought of before it was adopted ; and it was determined to sail at once for Savannah. And then Nettie realised how much her aunt really depended upon her. Not that Mrs. Allen gave her the comfort of telling her that she missed the sight of her bright face : she only learned the truth by her querulous fretting at her tardiness when she was detained at home, and her complaints of the shortness of her visits ; for she was now so much needed by Mrs. Thorn that the time which she could spend on the shore was necessarily much shortened.

On the day before their departure there was so much to

be done that Nettie could not find time to go down to the fishing-huts until the afternoon, and then Mr. Thorn went with her, to pay his final visit to Mrs. Allen. When they reached the house they found her sitting up in a rocking-chair. She received them very coldly, and after a moment asked Nettie, rather sharply, why she had not come to see her on the previous day.

"I could not find time to come, Aunt Susan. You know that we are going away to-morrow. The house is to be closed, and everything has to be put safely away."

"Oh, yes, everything must be attended to before me."

The colour flushed over Nettie's face and neck. She opened her lips as if to speak, and then, turning quickly away, bent over little Jack to hide her tears.

"That was hard, Mrs. Allen," said Mr. Thorn, as Nettie went into the next room with the boy. "She did not deserve that from you."

He did not speak harshly, but there was a gravity in his manner which checked the petulant answer that rose to her lips.

"I cannot understand," he went on, "why it is that this child's unselfish devotion to you meets with such a poor reward."

She looked at him for a moment, returning his steady gaze with equal steadiness, and then the sharp eyes suddenly softened and a great tear rolled slowly down the pale, sunken cheek.

"I know I'm hard on her," she said slowly; "hard and cruel. You think I haven't felt her kindness, but I have. She's been as patient as a lamb, and we've tried her sorely too. It isn't because she hasn't spirit either. I've seen her eyes flash often when the boys have been ugly to her. Only the night before last, you remember, she staid late to get the boys' supper; she was pouring out the tea, and Sam was finding fault with everything. The bacon was too much cooked, the tea was weak, and

so on, until I wondered how the girl stood it; and at last he says, 'This aint fit for a cat to drink,' and pitched the cup full of tea out on the floor that she'd just cleaned up. The colour all went out of her face in a minute, and I saw her clasp her hands together and bite her lips to keep herself from answering him. I waited to see what would come of it, and all at once she looks up and says, as sweet as could be, 'I'm sorry it isn't good, Sam. Shall I try again?' The boy was just amazed, so he was. He only said, 'No, I guess not;' but his voice was kind of soft, and after supper he took the mop and washed up the floor himself. I don't understand her, she's so changed."

"The change is easy to understand," said Mr. Thorn. "God has put His love into her heart."

"And does that make her so good? You told me once that she was a Christian, and I thought she'd be always fussing and preaching; but that isn't her way. She's never said a word to me, only I've thought sometimes that she talked to Jack about God just so as I could hear. If the boy minds all she's told him he'll be a good child; and—and—if I mind all I've seen in her, I'll be a better woman."

She bent her head down on her hands; she was not used to tears, and she would have hidden them if she could.

"I never thought of God as she does," she went on. "I've had such a hard, busy life, that I thought I hadn't time to stop and think about religion; but Nettie has taught me different. She seems to rest so on Him, and to love Him so. I begin to think that God isn't so stern and hard, after all. If He has made her so sweet and gentle, He must be so Himself."

"He is our tender and compassionate Father," said Mr. Thorn, kindly. "He holds out His loving hand and says, 'Come unto me.' All we have got to do is to take it. If you cling to that outstretched hand, He will put

into your heart the same spirit of love which He has shed upon Nettie."

The door opened as he spoke, and Nettie came in. She paused when she saw the traces of tears on her aunt's face, and turned to leave the room again.

"Come in, child," said Aunt Susan. "Come here to me."

Nettie came and stood beside her chair, and Mr. Thorn, rising quickly, said, "It is time for us to leave. I must bid you good-by, praying most earnestly that you may find help and comfort in the unspeakable love of God. Nettie, I will wait for you on the beach."

He shook Mrs. Allen's hand warmly, and went out, leaving them alone together. There was silence in the room for a few minutes, and then Nettie laid her hand on Aunt Susan's, and said,—

"Auntie, have you learned to love the Lord Jesus?"

"Not yet," said Mrs. Allen, leaning her head down upon the child's shoulder. "I'm groping for Him, but I'm in the dark. But if He'll put out His hand to help me I'll try to live faithful to Him. Surely if He's made you what you are, He can do something even with me. Don't you think He can?" she asked, looking up with a pitiful pleading in her face.

"I *know* He can, and will," said Nettie, confidently.

"Oh, Aunt Susan, He's our own dear Father!"

"Mr. Thorn," said Nettie, as she walked beside him on their way toward home, "I do believe you have taught Aunt Susan to love God."

"No, I had nothing to do with this great change in her. God sent one of the lambs of His flock to guide her to Him. My little Nettie has let her light shine so brightly before her, that she has learned to glorify her Father in heaven. God has given you a great reward."

"Do you mean——" She hesitated. She could not ask the question which trembled on her lips.

"I mean that, by God's blessing, you have taught a hard, cold heart, to love and hallow His name."

That night, as they were all sitting around the fire in the sitting-room, Mr. Thorn said suddenly,—

"Nettie, do you remember a name by which I called you when I left you at your uncle's on the first day of your stay there?"

"Yes, sir," she said, glancing up quickly.

"I think that you liked it. Is that so?"

"Yes, it made all that hard day easy for me."

"Would you like to take and keep it; and to give Mrs. Thorn and me each a new name?—to be our daughter instead of our maid?"

Nettie drew a long breath, but she did not answer; and Mr. Thorn went on,—

"We want to adopt you as our own—to have our child with us when we go away. Will you be glad to have it so?"

"Glad?" said Nettie, softly. "It's just next to having God for my father."

"Then take your father's first kiss," he said, touching his lips to her forehead. "And now mother wants her little girl, I am sure."

And "mother" took "her little girl" in her arms, and laid her face to hers. There were not many words spoken. Mrs. Thorn only said, "My own little daughter," and Nettie answered by pressing her round cheek closer to the wan face, whispering, "Mother, mother," as if the name were music to her.



LITTLE MARGERY.

"Thy Kingdom come."

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LITTLE MARGERY.

CHAPTER I.

MARGERY'S GRANDFATHER.

“ ‘**THY** kingdom come!’ Oh, I wish it would come! ’cause then everybody would love the Lord Jesus,—Mr. Thorn said so.”

The little girl who spoke stood upon a rough wooden bridge, looking down into the bright water beneath, with a very serious expression on her face. The noisy brook rushed along, whirling and eddying, tumbling and tossing over the rocks and stones which lay in its bed, seeming to laugh in Margery’s sober face as she leaned over the rail, thoughtfully watching it.

The brook flowed at the foot of a high, rocky bank, which rose abruptly from the water’s edge, and around which a narrow footpath wound from the base to the top. But the bridge upon which the child stood led over the water to a piece of smooth, green meadow-land, bounded by a thick forest of dark pines.

“Come, Duke,” said the little girl, laying her hand upon the head of a great Newfoundland dog, which had been sitting quietly beside her.

As he rose to obey, she crossed the bridge to the meadow, and threw herself down at the foot of a large

tree. The dog stretched himself at her side, and she rested her head upon his shaggy shoulder and lay watching the dancing waves. By-and-by her eyelids began to droop, slowly the long lashes sank upon her cheek, and Margery was asleep. And there she slept, with the dark pine-forest behind her, the blue sky above, and the sparkling water at her feet, until the sinking sun, falling in through the waving branches of the old tree, paused, for a moment, to kiss her eyelids open with his last soft ray.

"Margery! Margery!" called a voice from the opposite bank.

Duke pricked up his ears, and raised his head with a low growl: but the next moment his head fell slowly to its old position upon his folded paws. He knew the voice, and felt that his little mistress was in no danger.

"Yes, auntie," said Margery, in a very sleepy tone. Then she sprang up suddenly. "Why, I've been asleep in the meadow!"

"Margery, come dear."

"Yes, Aunt Annie, I'm coming real quick. What do you think?" she went on, gleefully, as, running across the bridge, she gained the foot of the winding-path, and proceeded to mount it with steady, nimble feet, which evidently knew the rough path well. "What do you think? I've been fast asleep on the meadow-land. I just laid down there to watch the waves playing 'Catch if you can,' and the next thing I knew, the sun was shining in my face, and you were calling me."

"You should not lie on the grass in spring-time, Margery. It is very dangerous; you might be made sick by falling asleep so. Don't do it again, dear."

"No, Aunt Annie. I didn't know it was naughty. Is it supper-time?"

"Yes; and grandfather has come."

"Grandfather has come!" repeated Margery, opening

her brown eyes to their utmost extent. "Why, Aunt Annie, it is Sunday!"

"Yes, it is Sunday."

"But I thought it was wicked to travel about on God's holy day. Father told me so."

Aunt Annie made no answer, and Margery walked on beside her in silence. This visit of her grandfather had been thought of by day, and dreamed of by night, for weeks and weeks. She had never seen him, for he had lived in the far West for years; but now he had consented to come East, and make his home with his son, Margery's father. She had often heard of this dear grandfather far away, and he had sent her little presents, and she had his picture in her Testament; so she had learned to love the old man, although she had not seen him. But, somehow, the eager joy which she had felt when she heard that he had really come had subsided. The little feet moved on very quietly, and the little face was very grave.

"Ah! here comes my one ewe-lamb," said her father, as she ran up the steps of the porch where he stood with the old man.

"Come and see grandfather, Margery. She isn't very large, you see, father; but what there is of her is very precious."

"I should think so, indeed. Will you give grandfather a kiss, darling?"

She looked at him searchingly. It was a pleasant face, with its gentle mouth, and soft, gray eyes; and the beauty of it was enhanced by the crown of snow-white hair which clustered about the temples.

"Well," said the old man, "how do you like me? I suppose that you will not give me a kiss until you have made up your mind on that point. Do you think you can love such a very old grandfather as this?"

She answered by springing upon his knee, and laying her sunny face close to his withered cheek.

"I can love you dearly, dearly!" she said. "I couldn't help that, could I, when you are my own grandfather?"

"What a lovely little lass she is, Thomas!" said Peter Bray to his son, as he sat watching Margery while she flitted about the room, aiding her aunt in clearing the supper-table. "But she is very small for her age."

"Yes, she is very small; but she is quite as strong as other children, and as full of life and frolic as a kitten."

"Is she? She seemed to me very old for her years. She looked at me, when I asked her for a kiss, as if she would read me through with those great eyes. Does she always study new friends in that way?"

"No, I never saw her do so before; but she often has an old way with her. Yet she is very playful. You should see her put her little puss to sleep; you would think it was a young mother tending her baby. She will sit there rocking, and singing in a low voice, until the kitten seems about to fall asleep, and then she will lay it gently on her knee and trot it up and down very softly. When it sleeps she lays it on a pillow, and covers it with a shawl, and steps about on tiptoe, hushing every one that comes near. But ten minutes after you may find her running races with the dog, or paddling in the brook, shouting and laughing with the merriest. She is very bright and quick with it all. Annie says that she is really a great help to her in her work about the house."

"Come here, little sprite," said her grandfather, catching Margery's hand as she passed him; "come and sit on my knee. I'm not very strong, but I can hold such a fairy as you, I think."

"In one minute, grandpa," said Margery. "My work isn't done yet. Aunt Annie and I have the tea-things to wash."

"How many cups and saucers do you break in a week?" asked the old man, laughing at her gravity.

"Oh, we don't break any! We're very careful of our

things. Aunt Annie wants to leave everything in good order when she is married and goes away, for I am to keep house for you and father."

"Are you? I am glad of that. But I shall have to look out that the brownies don't carry off my wee fairy in the mean time. When your work is done, Mrs. House-keeper, I will tell you a nice story about a fairy and a brownie."

"But, grandpa——" She hesitated, and looked at her father.

"Well, what is it, little one?" asked Peter Bray.

"We don't have stories about fairies and brownies on Sunday, grandpa. Did you forget?"

"Do you keep the child so strict as that, Thomas?" said the old man, turning toward his son.

"I have taught her to keep the Sabbath-day holy, father."

"What nonsense to bind that baby by such laws!" said the grandfather, as Margery left them to return to her aunt. "She is too young to have serious notions put into her head."

"She is not too young to be cherished by my earthly love," said the father; "then why should she not be blessed by the heavenly? Why should I hold her back from the Lord of glory, when He says, 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me?' No, father, you make a great mistake. No child is too young to know that, in its feebleness, it may lay its head upon the Saviour's breast, and so be made strong."

"Ah, well! that is your creed, I know, Thomas, but it is not mine. I don't like to see children religious. It sobers them too much."

"Wait until you have seen more of Margery, father. I do not think you will find that her religion has given any check to the joyousness and happiness of her life."

"Father! father!"

Thomas Bray looked around toward the room from

which the call came. It was now quite late in the evening. Margery had gone to bed some time before, and he had supposed her asleep.

"What is it, darling? Are you sick?" he asked, anxiously, stepping quickly toward the little white-robed figure which stood in the doorway.

"No; but I want to speak to you. Shut the door, please."

Wondering what was troubling the child, he lifted her in his arms, and, closing the door, sat down with her upon the bed from which she had crept.

"What ails my baby?" he asked, pressing the little head close to him. "Were you dreaming?"

"No, father: I couldn't go to sleep. Father, is grandpa a bad man?"

"Why, no, my child. He is the kindest and best of fathers, and a very gentle, tender-hearted old man."

"What made him come on Sunday?" asked Margery. "Isn't it wicked to travel on Sunday?"

"Yes, unless it is absolutely necessary, Margie. But grandpa does not think of these things as we do. Poor grandpa does not love God. My little girl must ask her dear Father in heaven to teach grandpa to love Him," said Thomas Bray, tenderly stroking the fair head; "and she must be very sweet and loving to him, and try to let him see what a precious friend our blessed Master is."

Margery did not answer. She had been sorely distressed and perplexed by her grandfather's carelessness with regard to the Sabbath: but that he should not love the God toward whom her heart went out so gladly she could scarcely understand. When her father laid her down again in her bed, saying, "We must try to lead dear grandpa to Jesus, Margie," she put her arms about his neck, and drew his head down closer, to whisper,—

"We'll pray for him, father; won't we? And then God will surely teach him, you know."

That night, as Thomas Bray lay upon his bed, thinking sorrowfully of the old gray-haired man, who, through all his long life of seventy-nine years, had lived in thoughtlessness of God and God's commands, he heard a slight rustle in the trundle-bed beside him where Margery slept, and then, in the faintest whisper, a voice said,—

“ Father dear, are you awake ? ”

“ Yes, Margie.”

The next moment she had clambered from her bed into his own, and, nestling close to him, laid her head upon his breast.

“ Father, don't you remember what Mr. Thorn said in his sermon this morning about ‘ Thy kingdom come ? ’ ”

“ Yes, dear ; did you understand him ? ”

“ I guess so. I can't tell what he said ; but I thought he meant that to make Jesus' kingdom come, we must try to teach every one about Jesus. Was that it ? ”

“ Yes, Margie, that was what he meant.”

“ Well, I've been thinking, father, that if we can teach dear grandpa about Him, he will love Him ; and that will help the kingdom, won't it ? ”

“ Yes, my pet, it will.”

“ Then, that would be doing two things,—it would be making grandpa very happy, and it would be helping the dear Saviour too. Oh, father ! ”

“ What is it, Margie ? ” for she had suddenly clung closer to him.

“ It seems too much to do. Will our Jesus let us do so much ? ”

“ Surely He will, darling ; and He will help us to do it. You know that, Margie ? ”

“ Yes, I do know ; only it seemed such a great thing to ask. But He is so dear and good, I know He'll help us. I'll tell you what we'll do, father ; you tell grandpa all you know, and I'll pray to the Lord Jesus for him. I'm too small to talk to him about it, but I'll pray just

as hard as such a little girl can. He'll hear me, won't He?"

"He will; I know he will, my child."

"Good-night, father."

Then she slipped back into her trundle-bed, and, stretching up one hand to meet her father's, clasped his closely and so fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST EFFORT.

"Just hear the little one!" said Peter Bray to himself the next morning, as a merry peal of laughter rang out on the fresh morning air. It was very early, and he had not yet left his room, but Margery was already up and out, and it was her voice which he heard beneath his window. "Surely," he went on, as another joyous shout reached his ear, "Thomas told the truth when he said her religion had not sobered her; she's as gay as a lark this morning. What can it be that makes her laugh so, the little darling! grandfather's own pet?"

He went to the window as he spoke, and there saw Margery standing on the path just below him, springing up and down, and clapping her hands in the greatest glee.

"Why, what is the matter with my fairy this morning?" asked the old man.

"Oh, grandpa, look at Duke! Do look at Duke!" she cried, pointing toward her dog, who was rolling over and over on the grass, vainly trying to shake from his long curly hair something which looked like flour, and with which he was covered from ears to tail.

"Aunt Annie was mixing bread, and he ran against

the table and knocked a great pan of flour down on himself. Oh, Duke! Duke!" and she danced about again, laughing as heartily as before. Suddenly the dog sprang up, shook himself violently, and ran off down the path which led to the brook.

"He's going to wash himself," cried Margery, starting in pursuit; but Aunt Annie's voice checked her.

"Don't go to the brook, Margie. Breakfast is ready."

She hesitated, and her face clouded a little; she wanted to see the end of this frolic: but the next moment her eye caught her grandfather's as he watched her from his window, and her brow cleared instantly.

"I won't go, auntie," she said, cheerfully; "I'll just wait here. Why don't you come out, grandpa?" she added, turning to him. "It's real pleasant."

Just as he left his room in answer to her invitation, Aunt Annie called them to come to breakfast.

"Well," she said pleasantly, as Margery came in, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling, and her curls somewhat in disorder, "you have had quite a frolic. Are you ready to sit down now, and eat your breakfast quietly?"

She was very ready for her breakfast, but she did not seem able to do anything quietly that morning; she was in a thoroughly merry mood, and over and over again her joyous laugh broke out afresh on the smallest pretence.

"What a light-hearted little thing it is, Thomas!" said the old man to his son, as they left the room together.

"Yes," said Thomas Bray, "she is always happy. I think that, young as my Margery is, her heart is filled with 'the peace of God;' and that, father, 'passeth understanding.'"

"Grandpa, don't you want to come and see my chickens?" asked Margery, running out after them.

"You mustn't tire grandpa, Margie," said her father.

"She won't do that," answered the grandfather. "Yes, I'd like to see the chickens very much."

"Well, I'll be here again in a minute," said Margery.
"I must go and get their breakfast."

She soon reappeared with a basket on her arm, and a dish held fast in both hands.

"Is that the chickens' breakfast in that dish?" asked grandpa, as he walked on beside his guide.

"Yes: we used to give them only corn, but now we're 'nomical."

"You're what?" he asked, in a puzzled manner.

"'Nomical," said Margery.

"What does that mean?"

"Why, don't you know 'nomical, grandpa? It means what people do when their father don't get so much work as he used to have. 'Nomical for chickens is eating scraps instead of corn, which father must buy at the store; and 'nomical for little girls is when they don't have any new dress, but Aunt Annie makes over some old ones. I don't like 'nomical at all; do you, grandpa?"

"No, not very much," said he, with an amused look.
"It is not good to be poor."

"Oh, we aint poor!" said Margery. "Poor people don't have anything to eat, and no fire when it's cold, and they look sorry all the time. Oh, we aint poor at all! We're real nice and happy."

"You need not tell me that, I can see it plain enough. There seems to be a blessing on the house," he added, as if to himself; but Margie thought that he spoke to her, and she answered him,—

"Why, I guess there is a blessing here, grandpa. Father asks God for it every night and morning, and you know God gives us everything that's good for us, and blessings must be good. Don't you think so?"

"This is the chicken-house, I suppose," was grandpa's answer.

She looked up in surprise, but, without saying anything more, led the way into the chicken-yard, calling,—

" Kip! kip! kip!"

She was surrounded in a moment, and the crowd seemed to know her, rushing in close to her feet, and even snatching morsels off the plate as she held it low that they might reach it. She called them all by name; now authoritatively dismissing those who she thought had received their share, and now calling those who had been beaten back by their stronger neighbours. After the plate was emptied, she took some corn from the basket and scattered it among them.

" I give them a little corn for dessert," she said, as she put the cover upon her basket again. " Now there's no more animals to see, unless you would like to go down and see Mrs. Duchess and her pups. Duchess is over in the meadow-land, and so is Brindle, the cow."

" I think I won't go to see them now," said grandpa. " I am rather tired for that walk. Old men can't do very much, and you know I had a long ride in the cars yesterday."

" Yes."

Margery looked very grave.

" What are you thinking of, little one? Your face changed as suddenly as it did when you wanted to run off with Duke. What became of that cross look this morning?"

" Did you see it, grandpa? I'm sorry you saw me look naughty and cross."

" What made you come back so quickly? Were you afraid Aunt Annie would scold?"

" Oh, no, she don't scold! She only looks very sorry when I'm naughty."

" And does that make you try to be good?"

" Yes, grandpa, that and one other thing. Oh! I'm always so sorry when I'm naughty, because then I know Jesus is troubled too."

" Who did you say, Margery?"

then with a sigh he closed his eyes, as if to sleep. For a few moments she stood there quietly, and then, seating herself on the edge of the settle, began to sing in a low, clear voice,—

“Jesus loves me ; this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong :
They are weak, but He is strong.

Jesus loves me ; He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide :
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.

Jesus loves me, loves me still ;
Though I'm very weak and ill :
From His shining throne on high
Comes to watch me where I lie.

Jesus loves me ; He will stay
Close beside me all the way :
If I love Him, when I die
He will take me home on high.”

As the last words warbled from her lips she bent her face close to his to see if he were asleep, and then, stealing on tip-toe across the room, went out and closed the door.

But still the soft music seemed to ring through the air. Over and over again he heard these sweet words,—

“Jesus loves me ; He who died.”

Would the gates be opened for the old man who had faced, alone and unaided, the winds and storms of seventy-nine long winters, as well as for the child who, in her short life of seven years, had already learned to rest on the love of Him who had died that both might be saved ? or had he rejected that love too long ? Peter Bray did not sleep that morning. Neither soft cushions, nor shaded light, nor even weariness itself, could overcome his wakefulness. He

lay and thought and thought until his brain grew weary, but he could not sleep.

"Aunt Annie," said Margery, coming into the room where her aunt was setting the table for dinner, "you have only put on three plates."

"Yes, dear, I know it. Father is not coming home to dinner."

"Not coming home to dinner?" repeated Margery. "Why didn't he tell me? Where has he gone?"

"He has gone over to Squire Thorn's to paint his barn, and it would take too much time from his work to return at noon. I thought you knew he had gone."

The little face had grown very sober, and the red lips were quivering fast. For a moment she stood winking her eyes to keep back the blinding tears, but it would not do, and turning suddenly away she ran out of the room.

"Margery, Margery!" called her grandfather; but Aunt Annie stopped him.

"Let her go, father; she will get over it in a moment. She cannot bear to have her father away all day, but she will cheer up again. I thought he had told her that he would not be at home, or I should have spoken of it before. It came too suddenly for her."

In a few minutes Margery came back. Her cheeks were somewhat flushed, and there were traces of tears still to be seen, but she smiled as she seated herself at the dinner-table, and said quite cheerfully,—

"I'm not going to cry, Aunt Annie; only," and her voice shook a little, "only I was so very disappointed."

"I know you were, darling. But we must do the best we can without father. Grandpa, and you, and I, will do nicely for this afternoon; and then, when father comes home to-night, we'll have a gay time together."

Margery's face brightened, and she chatted on merrily

through the remainder of the meal. Her grandfather watched her curiously, thinking over in his mind those words she had spoken in the morning in reference to God's taking her father from her. "If He should, He will take care of me Hissself." She had said it so quietly, so confidently; and yet she loved this father with such a clinging love, that the mere separation of a day tried her endurance to the utmost. Margery had told her father, on the night of the old man's arrival, that she was too small to talk to him, but she little knew how carefully he watched the prints of her tiny feet as she walked trustfully on in the path which God had marked out for her.

Nothing more was said with regard to the father's absence, and Peter Bray thought it probable that Margery had forgotten her disappointment, and would think no more of it until she saw him again. But as the evening closed in he found that he was mistaken. No sooner had the clock struck six than Margery drew an arm-chair up to the crackling wood-fire, placed a pair of slippers before it, and her own chair close beside it, and then stationed herself at the window, with her face pressed against the glass. The fair morning had been succeeded by a raw, chilly afternoon; the wind whistled drearily around the house, and from far away on the beach they could hear the dash of the breakers as they rolled heavily in.

"I would not stand by the window, Margery," said Aunt Annie. "The wind comes in there. I am afraid you will take cold."

"But father likes to see the light when he comes up the road, auntie."

"I know he does; but you can turn the curtain aside, you need not hold it."

Margery came back into the room rather reluctantly, and sat down in her arm-chair by the fire. Pretty soon she rose, and going to the table where Aunt Annie sat with her sewing, stood beside her.

"Aunt Annie," she said, somewhat hesitatingly.

"Well, dear."

"Don't you think that father likes to see something else but the light when he comes up the road?"

"What does he want beside, Margie?"

"A little face," said the child. "The little face he loves."

"Oh, you coaxer!" said Aunt Annie with a laugh.

"Well, then, the face must be all that he shall see, for the child he loves must be bundled up in my big shawl."

To this condition Margery readily assented, and soon she stood in the window again, wrapped in a large blanket-shawl. And when Thomas Bray came up the road, wearied with his day's labour and his long walk, and chilled by the keen east wind, the first sight of his home sent warmth to his heart.

The dancing fire-light fell through the window with a bright glow, but the picture which cheered his heart was that which Margery had known full well would please him best,—the curly head covered by the red shawl pinned beneath the dimpled chin, the rosy cheek pressed close to the glass, the eyes peering out into the darkness, looking for him. His step quickened, and in another moment the house-door was thrown open, and Margery had sprung into his arms.

"Thomas," said Peter Bray to his son, as they sat talking together that evening after Margery had gone to bed, "I cannot understand that child of yours: she is so womanly, and yet such a perfect child."

"She is very mature for her years, I know," said Thomas; "but I suppose that is due to her living alone with Annie and me. She seldom has a playmate, and, being constantly with grown people, she naturally falls into their older ways."

"But it is not only that. She is child enough to cry because you happen to be away at dinner-time, and yet

woman enough to tell me that a blessing rests upon this house because you ask God for it; and that, if you are taken from her, God will take care of her—and to say it firmly too, devoted as she is to you!”

“That is not womanliness, father; that is faith. She might have grown to be a woman in years without learning these precious lessons. She might even, father, live to the verge of fourscore years without learning them.”

As he spoke, the younger man laid his hand tenderly upon the shoulder of the elder, and bending forward tried to look into his averted face. But his father pushed the hand aside, as he answered, testily,—

“There, there! don’t preach at me because I’m near fourscore. The child is a lovely child, but you have put strange notions into her young head.”

“It was a greater than I who put them there, father,” was the quiet answer.

“There is a storm coming, isn’t there?” asked Peter Bray, anxious to change the current of his son’s thoughts.

“Yes, and I’m afraid it will be a very severe one. It has been terrible along the coast, they say; the river is rising already. Even our little brook here is much swollen. I had to caution Margery this morning not to cross to the meadow-land. The water rose so much last night that I was afraid our slight bridge might not be quite safe for her. I suppose the storm will reach us by to-morrow, if not to-night.”

CHAPTER IV.

SUNSHINE AND CLOUDS.

THE expected storm fell upon the little village before day-break the next morning. Margery woke to find the rain pouring down heavily, and to hear the wind moaning and

shrieking around the house with a dismal sound, and dashing the branches of the trees violently against the window-panes. It sounded cold and wintry, so she drew the quilt a little closer over her shoulders, and lay listening and thinking what a nice warm nest she had to cuddle into. By-and-by she heard a slight rustle, as if some one were moving about in the room. She could not see who it was without moving, and, too comfortable to do that, she whispered softly,—

“Father.”

“Father is not here, Margery,” said Aunt Annie’s voice. “He has gone out to bring Brindle in.”

“Then it must be time to get up. Oh, what a hard rain this is!” she said, joyously, as she sat up in bed.

“You seem to be very glad of it,” said Aunt Annie.

“Yes, I’m ever so glad, ’cause father won’t go out all day. He said last night, if it stormed to-day he could not go on with Squire Thorn’s job, and he had no other. That’s what makes me so glad. I’ll have him home all day.”

“I wish he was as happy over it as you are,” said her aunt.

“Is he sorry?” asked Margery, quickly.

“Yes, he looks so. You must try to cheer him up.”

“Oh, I can do that!” said Margery, confidently. “If he looks ever so sorry, I can make him laugh. But why does he feel badly, auntie?”

“Because he needs the money which he will have when the work is finished. He needs it very much.”

“Does he? Then I aint so very glad it rains, after all. But, auntie, I can’t help being *some* glad. Poor father! But I’ll cheer him up.”

She was just dressed when she heard his voice in the kitchen. Away she ran to meet him, and when Aunt Annie came in, a few minutes later, she saw that Margery’s medicine had already begun to work a cure. The cloud

which had rested on Thomas Bray's face was not so heavy as it had been, and more than once he laughed aloud at her prattle as she sat on his knee.

All day long the storm beat down drearily enough, but none of its dreariness seemed to penetrate within doors. Cheerful and happy as she always was, Aunt Annie had seldom seen Margery in such a merry mood. The shadow had been chased from her father's brow, and she seemed quite determined that it should not rest there again if laughter and fun could frighten it away. But as the hours wore on, and Margery's romping humour still continued, Aunt Annie began to fear it might be followed by disagreeable consequences, and she tried again and again to check her, but without any success. After dinner, as she was washing the dishes, she called the little girl to come and help her, hoping that the task might serve to quiet her. Margery came very readily, but she had no idea of giving up her frolic. She danced across the floor, and seizing a towel, flung it high into the air, intending to catch at it as it fell; but she missed her aim, and it struck a lamp, which Aunt Annie caught just in time to prevent its falling on the floor.

"Margery, do be quiet, dear. Can't you help me, like the nice little worker you often are? I will wipe the dishes, but you can put some of them away. Let me see how carefully you can carry those two plates to the closet."

Margery lifted the plates carelessly in one hand. Just at that moment the kitten ran across the floor; she sprang to catch it with her disengaged hand, and the plate fell with a crash upon the hearthstone, broken to atoms. The startled kitten fled in dismay, while Margery, after looking for a moment at the ruins of the china, broke out into another peal of laughter. Aunt Annie took her hands from the water, and, sitting down in a chair while she dried them, said gently,—

"Come here, Margery."

"Oh, Aunt Annie, I can't. I'm so tired laughing," said Margery, who had thrown herself on the floor.

"I want you to come to me, Margery."

The little girl looked at her for a moment, then rising suddenly, started to run toward her.

"Don't run, Margie. Come quietly."

She stopped running, but there seemed to be a lightness in her feet which made walking impossible, and the room was crossed with a half-skipping, half-jumping motion, which, after some turns from the straight path, brought her to her aunt's chair. Aunt Annie drew her to her side, and putting one arm around her, smoothed back from her face the tumbled curls which fell around it.

"Margery, I want you to listen to what I have to say," she said, firmly but very kindly.

"Don't scold me for breaking the plates, Aunt Annie. I'm real sorry, but they were cracked any way; so it aint so bad as if they were good ones, is it?" and she looked up roguishly into her sober face.

"I was not going to speak of the plates, Margie, although I am sorry they are broken. But I want you to understand that I am quite in earnest when I say that you must not romp so."

"I'm only having fun, Aunt Annie."

"But don't you know a little girl who often falls into trouble after having so much fun? I know of one who is apt to be naughty after laughing so very much."

"Oh! I'm not going to be naughty," said Margery. "Look in my eyes, is there any naughty in them?" and she lifted them to her face with such a twinkle in them that Aunt Annie could scarcely keep back a smile.

"No, there is no naughty in them now," she said; "but I don't want it to be there at all, and I am afraid it will come if you are not careful."

"I'll take care," said Margery very decidedly, and

shaking her head with another mischievous look, she ran away again.

Aunt Annie had been sitting busy with her sewing for some time, when she remembered that she had heard nothing of Margery for the last half hour, and she was in the act of rising to see what had become of her, when she heard a knock at the door.

"Come in," she said, turning to lay her work down on the table. The door opened slowly, and on the sill appeared a figure clad in a long coat, which swept the floor all around it, with its head covered by a hat which fell completely over its face, and its hand grasping a heavy cane. The grotesque little image stood quietly in the doorway, until, after a moment of amazed silence, Thomas Bray broke into a laugh, in which his father and sister joined very heartily. Then the dwarf pushed the hat up from its face, thereby letting loose a shower of light curls, which had been tucked away beneath it, and starting forward tried to run across the room.

"Why, what has the child got on?" said grandpa, suddenly growing grave. "Surely not my best hat and coat?"

Now if there was anything in the world that grandpa valued and cherished, it was his best hat and coat. Not that they were so very new, for they had been bought long years ago; but they were none the less handsome in his eyes for that, and his great care of them had kept them neat and whole, old-fashioned as they were.

"Dear, dear! the coat will be ruined!" he said, in a voice of distress, as he saw it dragging on the floor, Margery stumbling and tripping in the skirt, as she staggered across the room. Aunt Annie rose quickly, and going toward her, said,—

"Stop, Margery. You must take that coat off. You will spoil it."

"No, no, I aint Margie. I'm grandpa," and she ran out of the reach of Aunt Annie's arm.

"No, no," she cried again, half angrily now, as her aunt followed her, looking quite grave. "I won't take it off."

As she stumbled back, the hat fell over her eyes again, and pushing it hastily up that she might see how to escape her aunt, she thrust it back too far, and falling from her head it rolled on the floor.

"Margery, you must take these things off," said Aunt Annie, catching the little girl's arm as she would have sprung away to pick up the hat. "Grandpa does not like this."

"Don't, don't!" cried Margery, as the coat was drawn off, clinging to it with all her strength. "Oh! you bad, bad auntie!" she said, stamping angrily on the floor, for she felt the coat slipping from her grasp.

"Margery, Margery!" said the father, very sternly; but she would not listen even to him.

"I don't love you, Aunt Annie!" she said, stamping her foot again and bursting into a passion of crying. "You're ugly and bad! Go away! go away!"

"Margery, be quiet!" said her father.

For one moment she ceased crying, looking at him, startled by his tone, and then breaking out afresh into sobs, she pushed her aunt from her, exclaiming,—

"You've made my father cross to me, you naughty girl!"

Mr. Bray rose from his seat, and taking Margery's hand led her into the bedroom.

"You may stay here, Margery," he said, "until you can stop crying, and are ready to ask Aunt Annie's pardon;" and he went out again.

Margery threw herself upon the floor with a loud cry, and there she lay sobbing violently until her father said, from the sitting-room,—

"If my little girl makes such a noise I shall have to shut the door."

To this she made no answer except by crying even harder than before, and her father, after waiting a few moments, closed the door between the two rooms.

CHAPTER V.

REPENTANCE.

For a long time Margery lay there feeling very miserable, and, to tell the truth, making the most of her misery. For whenever she found herself feeling a little less wretched she would think of her father's stern face, and recall the words he had spoken in that strangely grave voice, and every time that she repeated this her tears flowed afresh. But by-and-by she grew tired of crying and lay quite still, with her head resting on her arm. Pretty soon the door opened and Aunt Annie came in. She glanced at the little girl, but the moment she looked at her a dimpled shoulder was twisted pettishly up so as to hide the tear-stained face, and without speaking she took a book from the top of the bureau and went out, leaving the door ajar. Margery was disappointed. She had hoped that she would come and sit down beside her,—perhaps even take her up on her lap, and pet and coax her into being a good girl,—and when she found that she was mistaken the tears came again. But she cried very softly now. She was afraid that the door would be shut; so she lay there with the tears slowly raining down, catching her breath now and then with a very dismal sob.

After a while she heard a sound of talking in the next room, and Aunt Annie's voice saying,—

“ You had better let me go to her, Thomas.”

“ No,” said the father, “ it is best to leave her to herself. I told her she must stay there until she was ready to ask your pardon.”

"Perhaps she will ask it if I go in. It will be very hard for her to have to come out and do it before father and you."

"Very well," said Mr. Bray, and then Margery heard Aunt Annie's light foot approaching the door. There was no cross shoulder raised against her this time. There was only a little flushed face lifted to hers, with a look of pitiful pleading, and a quivering voice saying,—

"Oh, please, dear Aunt Annie, do forgive your naughty girl."

Then Aunt Annie closed the door, and lifted her from the floor, and, sitting down in a large chair, laid the little wearied head upon her breast, softly rocking to and fro, until the child grew quiet again.

"Aunt Annie," said Margery, after a long silence, "I'm very, very sorry."

"I'm sorry too, darling; but don't cry any more about it. You will not be so cross to auntie again."

"It wasn't only the cross," sobbed Margery,— "that was very bad; but, oh, I told a lie! a naughty, wicked lie! I said you was a bad auntie, and you aint; you're the dearest that ever was."

"Well, well, I don't think you'll ever call me so again. I'm sure that you are really sorry for your sin, and the dear Saviour will forgive you if you ask Him."

"Even a lie, Aunt Annie?"

"Yes, dear, even a lie. He will forgive anything for which we are truly and heartily sorry."

"I've been such a great trouble to Jesus to-day," said Margery, faintly. "I'm almost afraid."

"Shall I ask Him for you?"

"Yes, please do, Aunt Annie."

They knelt down together, Margery clinging close to the kind arm which was clasped around her, while Aunt Annie asked that she might be forgiven. It was a very short and simple prayer. It told the dear Master that His

child had disobeyed Him,—that she had been very sinful and naughty; but it told Him also that she was very, very sorry, and if He would keep her close beside Him and help her to be good, she would try never to grieve Him again. Margery understood it all so well, that when Aunt Annie said “Amen,” before she had time to rise from her knees a pair of soft arms stole round her neck, and a voice whispered in her ear,—

“Auntie, was you once very naughty indeed, when you was a little bit of a girl?”

“Yes, Margie.”

“I thought so,” said Margery, “’cause you seemed to know just what I’d like to say to Jesus when I’d made Him trouble.”

That evening was spent very quietly. Margery’s romping mood had been thoroughly checked, and she sat in her chair, which she had drawn close to her father’s, as still as a mouse. Aunt Annie and grandpa had both left the room, and Mr. Bray had been reading for some time, when, noticing Margery’s silence, he turned to look at her. She was gazing steadily into the fire, evidently thinking very seriously; and as he looked at her, a great tear suddenly dropped upon her hands, which lay clasped in her lap. Another followed, and then another, but she made no sound. Her father laid his hand upon her head, and turned her face toward him.

“Is my child never going to smile again?” he said, playfully. “Why, you’ll cry the light out of your bright eyes. Come, come, my little maid, you must cheer up. What will grandpa say to a weeping fairy?”

Then lifting her from her chair, and seating her on his knee, he went on in a graver tone:—

“You have asked Aunt Annie to forgive you, Margery, and you have told your Saviour all your fault, and asked Him to forgive it, too. That is all you can do. Jesus has forgiven you, I am sure; and He will help you to

resist that bad temper if you try earnestly not to be passionate any more."

"But, father, I've—I've spoiled the kingdom."

"You've done what?"

"I've spoiled the kingdom."

"I don't know what you mean, my child."

"Don't you remember last Sunday night you told me that I must show grandpa how loving Jesus made a little girl, sweet and loving herself, and that would help the kingdom? And—and—oh, I haven't helped it a bit! I've just gone and spoiled it. Oh, if grandpa only had not seen me!"

"That would make no difference in your fault, Margery."

"No; but, father, it might make a difference with poor grandpa."

"How, dear?"

"You told him," said Margery, very falteringly, "you told him that I was Jesus' little girl, and—and—I'm afraid he'll think that if Jesus' little girls behave so he don't want to belong to Jesus. Won't he think so, father?"

"I scarcely think he will, my darling. We will ask the dear Saviour not to let your naughtiness lead to so much harm as that. This shows you, Margery, what care the Master's servants, even the youngest of them, must take to follow Him faithfully, lest their sins should bring evil on others as well as themselves."

"Yes, father," said Margery, softly.

"And now my tired birdie must go to her nest. Go and say good-night to grandpa and Aunt Annie. They are in the kitchen."

Margery went into the kitchen, kissed her aunt and grandfather, and then turned back as if to go into the sitting-room to her father. But instead of doing so, she lingered at the door until her aunt had twice asked her if she wanted anything.

"I want to speak to grandpa," she said, when the question was asked the second time.

"Do you want to speak to me?" said he, drawing her closer to him as she came to his side. "What does the fairy want to say?"

"Grandpa," said Margery, speaking very earnestly, and looking up into his face wistfully, "you won't let my being so bad this afternoon keep you away from Jesus, will you?"

"Keep me away, child? What do you mean?"

"Father told you I was Jesus' little girl; but you know, grandpa, very good people have naughty girls, like my dear, good father and naughty me. If I had been close by my Lord Jesus this afternoon I wouldn't have been wicked; and the only reason that I love auntie and am a better girl now is because He helped me so much. So you see the dear Lord Jesus is just as good as ever; the badness is all in me, indeed—indeed it is, grandpa."

"What makes you so very earnest about your badness?" said the old man with a smile.

"Because," said Margery,—“because I was afraid it would keep you from loving Him. But you won't let it, grandpa, will you? Do please say you won't let it.”

The smile faded from the old, worn face as he said,—

"No, little Margery, do not fear. I won't let your 'badness' keep me back from Him."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRESHET.

ALL night long the storm raged with increasing violence. The sleeping inmates of the house on the hill were often roused by the rushing sound of the river as it rose higher

and higher, hour by hour, and the roar of the brook, swollen now to a torrent, as it dashed on in its headlong speed to meet the river. Perhaps there was no house in the whole village where the tumult of the storm was more apparent than in that of Thomas Bray. The breaking of the surf upon the sea-beach could be plainly heard, although at a distance of more than three miles; the rising river was but a stone's-throw from them, while the brook, flowing almost close behind the house, wound hither and thither through various turnings, only to empty its waters into the larger stream at the foot of the hill, with a noise which to-night sounded like the fall of a cataract.

It was a strange sight which met Margery's eyes as she stood at the window in the morning looking out upon the scene. The low-lying meadow where she had thrown herself upon the grass only two days before, was now a part of the brook, the waters having completely covered it; so that it seemed as if their house stood between two rivers. And as the rushing stream dashed on in its wild race, she saw shrubs and small trees, torn up from the banks by their roots, tossing on the water; while pieces of board, branches of trees, and all kinds of odd things which had been picked up in its course, were whirling in the current.

As Margery stood watching the storm a boy ran hurriedly in, to beg her father to go to the assistance of a neighbour living on the bank of the river, whose house was in danger of being carried away. The water, he said, had already risen above the lower windows, and the wife and children had climbed to the roof of the house for safety. In a few moments her father had left the house, and Margery watched anxiously as she saw him run swiftly down the hill toward the water. She missed him for a while, and then saw him again. He was in a boat with two other men, pulling with all his might for the little house by the river-side, or rather now in the river, on whose roof she could see a woman with three children

gathered round her, waiting for help from the land. The boat reached them. One by one the children were placed in it, then the mother was lifted in, and the rowers bent themselves to their oars again. The party was safely landed, and then the boat was off once more on its mission of mercy. Many of the smaller houses on the bank were already half filled with the water, which every moment crept higher and higher, driving the frightened inmates to the roofs, to wait until the boats, of which the river was now full, could reach and save them. The Brays' house, perched on the top of the hill, was in perfect safety, and thither many of the homeless had wandered, to avail themselves of the kindly welcome which was given to all. The mother and three children who had been first rescued had come up to the hill at once; and when they had all been fed, and dressed in warm dry clothes, Margery coaxed the three little girls to the window.

"I want to watch for father," she said. "I know him whenever he comes near, because there's a handkerchief tied to his hat. I tied mine on it before he went out, so that I'd know him. There, there! That's him! Do you see that tall man standing in the boat, helping the woman out of the window? That's my father."

"Yes," said one of the girls, "he lifted me into the boat too. I wonder'd what he'd got that white thing on his hat for. So *you* put it on?"

"Yes; he was just running out of the house when I stopped him, and made him let me put it there, so as I'd know him."

"Aint you afraid to have him out on that dreadful water, when it storms so?"

"Oh, no," said Margery, quietly.

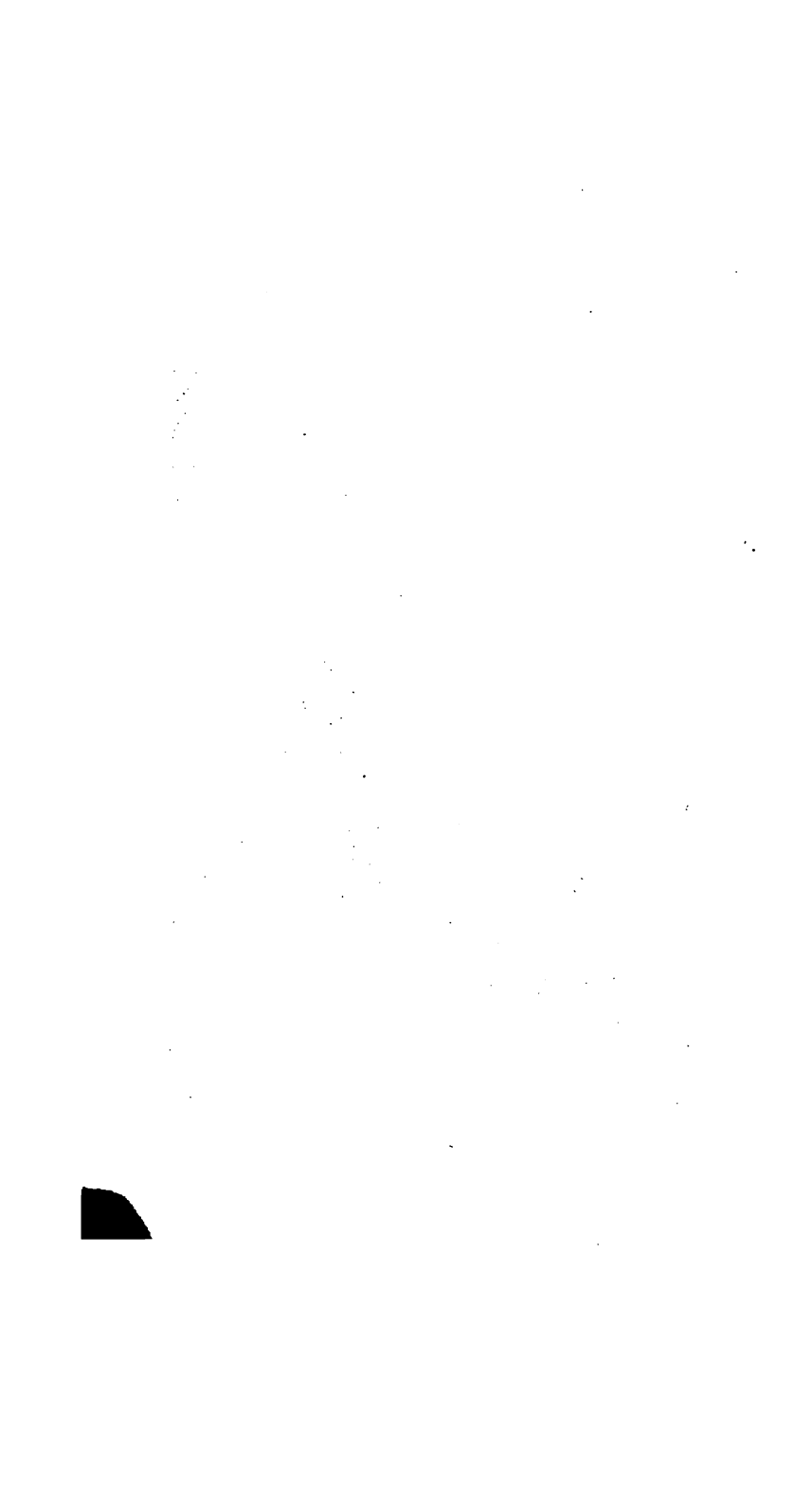
"I should think you would be," said the little girl: "but then, I suppose you think he's so big and strong he can take care of himself."







“Margery coaxed the three little girls to the window.”—P. 88.



"No," said Margery, shaking her head gravely; "but I think God can take care of him, and He will."

"Who did you say?"

"God."

"Oh!" said the little girl. After a moment she turned to Margery again, and asked,—

"What makes you so sure that God will take care of your father?"

"Because He always does, and because He has promised; and He always means what He says."

"How do you mean, He promised?" asked the child.

"When father went away this morning," said Margery, with her eyes still fixed on the water, "I was frightened, and I cried. But just as he went out of the door he said, 'There's a promise for us, Margery, in the forty-third chapter of Isaiah, and the second verse. Read it, and trust Him who made it to bring me back safe to my little daughter.' So I found it, and it took away all the frightened. This is it; I've been saying it over and over, while I stood here watching for father: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.' Isn't that a nice promise to have, when father is out on the deep, strong water?"

Before the child could answer, Margery clapped her hands together joyously, crying out,—

"There he is, there he is, safe on shore! And he's coming home! yes, he's surely coming home!"

She was not mistaken. A few moments more brought him in sight again, coming up the slope with the two men who had been with him all day in the boat, and she flew to open the door for him.

"Stand aside, stand aside, little woman," he said, stepping back as she would have thrown herself upon him; "I'm thoroughly drenched."

"But you aint drowned, father, not a bit,—are you?" said Margery, gleefully.

"No, I'm not drowned," he answered, laughing. "Now let me go, for this dripping water is not good for Aunt Annie's clean floor;" and he turned toward the bedroom, taking his companions with him.

"We'll be ready for our dinner in fifteen minutes, Annie," he said, pausing at the door. "All the river-side people are in safety now; the rain has ceased, and the rise is not so rapid as it was, so that I hope all danger is over."

The words had scarcely left his lips when he started, and said quickly,—

"What was that?"

"What?" said Aunt Annie. "I heard nothing."

"Yes, I heard something," said the child who had talked with Margery in the window.

They all listened, and it came again,—nearer, louder, wilder now,—a cry of agony and terror, which rang like a trumpet through the air. All rushed to the windows on the side of the house from which the sound came; and there, borne on by the mighty rush of the brook, was Duchess, standing upon the roof of the dog-house to which she was chained, with her wild eyes raised to the tempestuous sky, as if imploring help. Close at her feet crouched the little trembling pups, looking up with plaintive eyes to their mother, beseeching her piteously to rescue them from death. As the kennel swept past the house Duchess turned her face toward it, and saw her master; with a sharp bark she sprang toward him, but the cruel chain dragged her back, and again throwing up her head, she sent forth that terrible, appealing cry for help. As it quivered through the air, a deep bark answered it, and the next instant Duke rushed into the room, and, seizing his master's coat in his teeth, tried to drag him out into the storm once more.

"He wants you to try to save Duchess, father. Oh, can't you, can't you? You might get to the river before

she does," cried Margery, eagerly, dashing off the tears which blinded her eyes.

"Yes, the brook winds so, perhaps we might. Come, boys," and the three ran out again into the storm, with Duke close by his master's side.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESCUE.

THE sitting-room was very still when they had left it. Every one crowded to the window to watch the men as they sped swiftly down the hill; but they were soon beyond sight, and they could not hope to see them in the boat, for the bend of the river where the brook emptied itself was close at the foot of the slope, and thus quite hidden from view. One by one they all left the window but Margery. She still stood there, straining her ears to hear poor Duchess' cries as they were borne back more and more faintly on the air, until at last they ceased entirely. Then she turned suddenly away, and running across the room to where grandpa and Aunt Annie sat side by side, she flung herself on Aunt Annie's lap, crying out,—

"O auntie, auntie, my poor Duchess will be drowned! Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?"

"There is nothing for us to do, darling, but to wait and hope. You know who will help us in all our difficulties."

"Yes," said Margery. "But, Aunt Annie, may we pray to Jesus for a dog? I should think we might when it's such a dear, precious dog as Duchess,—shouldn't you?" and she looked up very pleadingly at her.

"Yes, dear, we may ask Him for anything, however small."

"Then let's ask Him to help her."

Her aunt had risen to give her chair to a woman who stood near; but, without a moment's hesitation, Margery knelt down beside her grandfather, and laid her folded hands upon his knee. The crowd of guests, sitting or standing around her, were all forgotten in her excitement; she thought only of Duchess, her father, and her God. All heads were bent, and all voices hushed, as there arose in the quiet room the music of that simple prayer, so short, so childlike,—

“Dear Lord Jesus, do please to save our Duchess from the dreadful water. Do please let father's boat get there before she comes to the bend. Dear Saviour, you kept the promise for father; please keep it for Duchess, too.”

When she rose from her knees she went back to her old station. Grandpa soon followed her, and, sitting down, lifted her up on his lap. She sat with her head leaning against him, and a very peaceful look on her face. Bending his head to whisper to her he said,—

“Do you think father will reach the bend, first, Margery?”

“I don't know, grandpa,” she said, looking at him very tranquilly.

“And suppose he does not, Margery?”

“Then Jesus will find some other way to save her. He will, indeed,” she said, eagerly, noticing a shade of doubt on her grandfather's face. “He knows lots of ways to answer our prayers. If father don't get there in time, he won't know what to do, but Jesus will. He always does. He——”

But here a loud shout from the river rang out upon the air. In an instant Margery sprang from her grandfather's knee, and stood upon the window-ledge. While he, standing behind her, supported her there. The next moment the dog-house shot into view, with Duchess still standing upon it. But there was no longer shrieking for help. They could see that her eyes were fixed on some object which they

could not perceive. But she had passed the bend, the river was sweeping her on and on, and the boat was not in sight.

"It is too late!" said grandpa, in a low, excited voice.

"No, no!" cried Margery. "See! there's the boat."

It came in view at the moment, but Duchess was carried on with such fearful rapidity that there seemed no hope.

"Too late, too late!" said half-a-dozen pitying voices. Margery turned upon them at once,—

"It isn't right to say 'too late,' when we've asked God to save her!" she exclaimed. "Oh, don't say it again!"

"Look, look!" cried another voice. "Is the house caught fast there? God help the poor brute! it is caught in the current!"

It was a moment of intense excitement. The dog-house, drawn into the current, was whirling round and round with terrible velocity, threatening every instant to be sucked under with its living freight. Duchess stood perfectly still, watching the boat. The oarsmen bent themselves to their task vigorously, and the boat flew over the rough water as if it were endowed with life, and determined upon the rescue.

"They can never reach her; she will surely go down," said grandpa.

Margery did not answer. Every nerve was stretched to its utmost tension. She could not have spoken if she would. Nearer and nearer came the boat. Now it was on a line with the dog-house,—now it had passed it.

"They are afraid of being drawn in themselves; they dare not risk it," said some one.

The next moment a rope was thrown through the air.

"Hurrah!" cried a boy who stood near Margery, "they've got grappling irons. Will they catch it?"

The dog-house whirled round furiously; the slack rope

tightened with a jerk. Could the rowers hold the boat against it; or would they be drawn into the vortex, and men, and dogs perish together in the same fearful death? For one instant the spectators held their breath in awful silence. The boatmen saw their danger, but their hearts were brave, and their arms were strong. They threw their whole souls into the work they had to do. For an instant the boat quivered and shook between the two opposing powers, and then, as the oarsmen threw themselves backward in a second stroke, yielded to the impulse, and sprang forward, dragging the dog-house in its course. A few more such strokes and then a boatman, with a little white handkerchief fastened to his hat, uncovered his head, glanced upward, and, swinging his hat in the air, shouted out a glad "Hurrah!" in which the rest joined heartily, and which was answered from the house on the hill by the waving of handkerchiefs and the wildest shouts.

But Margery did not shout. She stood quite still, leaning against her grandfather, until he asked her why she was so quiet. Then she turned round, and stole one arm about his neck,—

"Grandpa——"

"Yes, my darling."

"You see Jesus did find another way,—didn't He? It seemed as if they were all going to be drowned, but Jesus knew just what to do. We thought Duchess would be lost in the current, but that was the way Jesus chose to save her."

Grandpa only answered by patting her cheek, and saying that she was a precious little fairy.

And now there rose such a chorus of barks and cries, that it seemed as if all the dogs in the village must have assembled to see Duchess safely landed on shore.

"There, that's Duke's bark!" cried Margery; "that's Duke's glad bark. Duchess must be on shore. And there, listen! that's her answering him. Oh, aint it all

too beautiful!" and she clasped her hands together in a transport of delight.

Very soon her father came in, bearing in his arms a large bundle, which, on being unrolled, disclosed the three pups, while Duke and Duchess followed close behind. Never were dogs more fondled and petted than were Duchess and her babies. But whoever spoke to her, or coaxed her, Duchess' eyes were always fixed on her master, and no sooner did Mr. Bray turn toward the bedroom than she rushed after him, apparently unwilling to lose sight of him for a single instant. All through the evening she lay on the hearth at his feet, and no persuasion could draw her thence, save when one of her babies, bent on a tour of investigation, would roam farther than she thought safe. In that case she would slowly rise, bring back the truant, and lie down once more close beside the man who, she seemed to know, had placed his life in jeopardy for her.

"Dear old dog!" said Margery, leaning down from her seat on her father's knee to stroke Duchess' head. "She loves you so much, father."

"Yes, she loves me very much," and Thomas Bray drew a long sigh.

"Why, father, what made you do that?" asked Margery, drawing back to look into his face. "Are you sorry to have Duchess love you?"

"No, dear."

"Then what made you sigh so hard?"

"I ought not to sigh with such a treasure as this in my arms," was his answer, as he smiled at her. "I'll be a good boy and not do so any more." But his answer did not satisfy Margery.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHY FATHER SIGHED.

THE wind had changed at sunset, and the dark clouds slowly breaking up and floating away left the sky free to the bright stars, which came out to look down upon a scene such as they had not shone on for many a day. The water did not fall much that night, for the little rills from the hills and roadsides, swelled by the rain to brooks, still poured down into the larger streams. But during the next two or three days the waters subsided to nearly their old level, and the houses upon the banks were once more out of danger. Many of the visitors, however, still remained at the Brays', their houses needing repairs, or being so damp as to be uninhabitable, and Margery was seldom alone with her father during the week which followed the freshet. She was longing and watching for an opportunity to talk to him. Ever since the night when he had sighed so deeply in speaking of Duchess' affection for him she had observed him closely, and her quick eye had not failed to notice the cloud which deepened daily on his face.

One afternoon he came in quite early, and, telling her that he was at leisure for the afternoon, asked her if she would like to go out for a walk with him. She was always ready to go anywhere, with him for her leader, and they set out together for a ramble. The grass was fresh and green beneath their feet, the soft west wind murmured gently through the trees, and the birds sang sweetly, soaring high up toward the clear sky, as if trying to blend their notes of loving praise with the music of the golden harps struck by angel hands on the other side of that bright blue curtain.

And all this joyous, happy life seemed to pour itself into Margery's heart as she tripped along by her father's side, laughing and talking in the merriest strain, apparently quite ignorant of the fact that he seldom answered, and that from time to time he looked down at her with a sad tenderness in his face, which might have warned her that there was some sorrow in store for her.

But Margery was not so blind as she seemed. Her father's face was to her like an open book, and she had no difficulty in reading what was written there. But her loving heart was bent on cheering him if possible, and so her talk ran on as merrily as ever, plainly as she read the story. But finding at last that her efforts were vain, she determined on another course, and, turning aside from the road to a great stone which lay there, she said,—

“Let's rest here, father.”

“Are you tired?” he asked, sitting down.

“No, not much; but I want to ask you something, and you are so high up, when we are walking, I can't get near to you as I want to. Father, what made you sigh so hard the other day, when I said Duchess loved you?”

“I will tell you, Margery. I have wanted to tell you before, but we have had so little time alone that I could not find a good opportunity. You know, my darling, that father lost all his money a short time ago?”

“Yes,” said Margery, who was aware that through some misfortune, which she did not understand, her father had been dispossessed of his small property. “Yes, I know we must be 'nomical.”

“We must do more than that, Margery. I have had so little work that I am not ready with my rent. I must raise the money in some way, and the only thing I can do is to sell something which belongs to us.”

“Sell something?” said Margery, in a wondering tone.

"Why, what can we sell, father? We haven't got any groceries, or anything to make dresses of, like Mrs. Dixon, at the store."

"Can you be a brave little woman, Margery, while I tell you what I think of selling? Could you bear to part from something which you love very much?—from Duchess?"

It was not a very brave-looking face which glanced up at him,—half-frightened, half-bewildered at first; but, as the full understanding of his meaning burst upon her, wholly frightened, and piteously distressed.

"O father! My dear Duchess! I couldn't let her be sold," she said, in a choking voice.

Her father did not answer, except by pressing her closer to him, and stroking her hair tenderly. The next moment another fear struck her, and lifting her head she said, anxiously,—

"And Duke, Father?"

"I am afraid he must go, too, Margery."

It was a sharp trial for her, the first real trial of her life, for she had been too young to feel her mother's death. She sat quite still, trying to bear this great sorrow without adding to his grief; but it was very hard—so hard that when her father, seeing the struggle with which she kept back her tears, bent down and kissed her saying,—
"Don't try not to cry," she clung to him, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My poor little girl!" was all her father said. But those few words made Margery raise her head and try to comfort him; there was so much of pain in his voice. Dashing the tears from her eyes she looked up in his face with something very near a smile, as she said,—

"Your little girl is going to be brave now, father. She has had a good cry, and now she won't cry any more. When must they go?"

"To-morrow, darling."

It was rather sudden, but she bore it without flinching, and when he said,—

“ We must keep the closer to Jesus, Margery, and then our troubles will not harm us,” she answered, smiling,—

“ Jesus knows what is best for us father—don’t He ?”

“ Yes, Margery : we will trust it all to Him, however dark things may look to us.”

The walk home was much quieter than the walk out had been, but Margery was scarcely less happy. The loss of her playmates was a great trial to her, but then her father had taken her into his confidence ; she was no longer separated from him by any secret between them. If he was in sorrow she was with him, and the God whom they trusted was able to deliver them both. And so she walked along, holding her father’s hand, more subdued than she had been, but still quite cheerful.

Thomas Bray had engaged to take the dogs to the village in the morning, thinking it would be easier for Margery to see them leave the house with him, than with a stranger ; and when the time came for him to go the whole family gathered on the door-step to watch the departure. More than once that morning Margery’s fair curls had mingled with the dogs’ shaggy black locks, as, with her arms clasped around their necks, she bade them good-bye for the twentieth time.

And each, after they had started on their journey, came springing back to her side, as if they knew that they were bidding her a last farewell, until Duchess, seeing that the basket Mr. Bray carried, which held her babies, was fast disappearing from sight, bounded after him, and Duke followed her.

Old Peter Bray stood watching Margery, as, with her eyes fixed on the fast-retreating figures, she leaned against the door-way, quite lost to all around her. And when, with a long breath, she straightened herself up and entered

the house, he laid his hand upon her shoulder and said,—

“What do you think of it now, Margery?”

“Of what, grandpa?”

“Of the current into which we are being drawn?”

She glanced up quickly at him, understanding his allusion at once, and said, simply,—

“It’s a very strong current, grandpa—a very strong current, indeed; but Jesus is stronger.”

“Margery——” he said, in a very earnest voice, and then he paused.

“What is it, grandpa?”

“Where did you get this faith?” he asked. “I would give my life for it on this dark, dark morning.”

She was startled by his manner, and hesitated for an instant; then she said,—

“Father says Jesus give us faith. And don’t you know, grandpa, the hymn says,—

‘We shall find Him if we seek;
He will hear us when we speak;
He will answer us in love,
Take us home to dwell above.’”

She sang the few lines, looking up with a light and joy in her face which seemed to say, that He was even then and there answering her in love, and then she turned toward the old man and said,—

“We shall find Him if we seek, grandpa. Don’t you believe that?”

He moved away without speaking, and Margery went in to Aunt Annie.

CHAPTER IX.

UNCLE WILL.

WEEK after week passed away; the fresh green spring glowed into the warm bright summer, and the time drew near when Aunt Annie must leave her home on the hill for one far away across the blue sea.

She seldom spoke of that new home, and when she did, her eyes were almost always a little dimmed, for she dearly loved the brother whose comfort and help she had been for so long, and the little girl she had tended and cared for with a mother's watchfulness during the whole seven years of her life. But "Uncle Will," as she had taught Margery to call the hero whom the little girl's vivid imagination always painted in the brightest colours, had a still stronger hold upon her heart, and she had promised that she would go with him at the close of the summer to his English home. Even now the vessel which was to bring him to claim his bride was on the sea, bearing him every day nearer to the cottage from which he should take one of its dearest treasures.

But, fondly as Margery loved Aunt Annie, she had no ill-feeling toward "Uncle Will." She had been taught to love him from the first, and she looked forward to seeing him with some pleasure and a great deal of curiosity, for surely any one who could win Aunt Annie away from them all must be a very wonderful man. She had seen his picture, and she liked to look at it. It was a thoroughly Saxon face, with a wealth of light-brown hair thrown back from a high broad forehead, and a pair of blue eyes beaming pleasantly upon her as she gazed into them. But fair as the face was, it had a manly look upon it that Margery

liked, and trusted ; and once, when she had stood contemplating it for some time, she turned to Aunt Annie and said,—

“ I think it’s real nice, auntie. He looks like he’d take such good care of you.”

But only to Nettie Allen, her bosom friend and only playmate, did Margery whisper a secret which she kept close from Aunt Annie ; which was, that although “ Uncle Will ” was very nice, it wasn’t right for him to take away the only aunt a little girl had, and carry her off to England.

“ I wouldn’t tell Aunt Annie that, Nettie,” she said, one morning, as they were strolling arm-in-arm down the road toward Nettie’s home ; “ because she says he’s so good ; and he must be good else she wouldn’t love him so much : but I wish he’d take an English aunt and not mine.”

“ Maybe he didn’t find one he liked there,” said Nettie. “ I wonder what kind of aunts they have in England ? ”

“ I don’t know,” said Margery, “ but I’m sure there isn’t any aunt anywhere like my Aunt Annie.”

“ Perhaps that’s what your Uncle Will thinks,” said Nettie.

“ Maybe so, but I wish he didn’t,” said Margery, with a sigh ; “ only, perhaps he couldn’t help it.”

Over the sea came the ship, through wind and storm, through sunshine and clouds—now over water smooth as a lake, now over rough rolling waves—until one fair morning she rode into New York harbour and anchored there.

The next morning Margery was sitting on the door-sill, with a small tin pan in her lap, into which she was shelling peas. She sat singing over her work, and as she sang she heard a step on the gravelled walk, and lifting her head with a start, for she had not heard the click of the gate-latch, saw a stranger approaching her. A stranger ? No,

he was hardly that. Surely she knew those dark blue eyes, and—but without pausing for any farther reasoning she sat her pan down beside her, and rising from her seat went to meet him.

“Is it my Uncle Will?” she asked, half-confidently, half-hesitatingly.

“I do not know, indeed,” he said, smiling at her. “I must ask a question in my turn. Is this little Margery?”

“Yes; I am Margery Bray—Aunt Annie’s Margery.”

“Then I am Uncle Will,” he said. “You know my name at least.”

“How do you do?” said Margery, gravely putting up her lips to be kissed.

“I am very well, I thank you,” he answered, bending a very amused face for the proffered kiss: “and very glad that you are willing to receive me so kindly. I was afraid that my new niece might think me a sort of thief coming to carry off Aunt Annie.”

“Oh, no; I knew you couldn’t be that. Aunt Annie can’t bear thieves, and she loves you dearly. She says you’re just as nice as you can be.”

Such a hearty laugh ran through the garden that it brought Aunt Annie from the kitchen. She had heard that laugh before, and, although she had not expected to hear it until the next week, she knew it well. As Margery stepped on the door-sill with the visitor she came running to meet them.

“It’s Uncle Will, auntie,” said Margery; and she went out again into the garden, with a lonely feeling in her little heart that, for the first time in her life, Aunt Annie would be glad to have her away.

But soon she heard a voice calling her, and, returning to the house, she found her aunt on the front porch waiting for her. Uncle Will was there, too; and, between them, that lonely feeling was soon driven away. Aunt Annie looked very pretty. Margery had seldom seen her eyes so

bright ; and there was a smile, which came and went about her lips, as if it would have hidden itself if it could, but found it quite impossible in the sudden joy and gladness of her heart. And Uncle Will was so gay and merry, so tender with Aunt Annie, so kind and gentle with herself, that Margery could not help but love him ; and when she bade him good-night that evening she drew his head down to her lips, and whispered :—

“ Aunt Annie was right when she said you was so nice, and I ’ll try not to feel bad about your taking her away.”

For some days after Uncle Will’s arrival there was a great deal of discussion and deliberation going on in the house. Again and again Margery found her father talking earnestly with her new uncle, and sometimes she would come upon all the four—grandpa, father, Aunt Annie, and Uncle Will—with their heads very near together, in close consultation. She often wondered what was the matter ; but as nothing was said to her she asked no questions. She was lying in her trundle-bed one night, quite wide awake, although it was after ten o’clock, when she heard her father and aunt come into the room. Aunt Annie had in her hand a light, which she shaded as she came in, lest it should wake the little girl, and as she placed it on the hearth she said :—

“ Well, Thomas, have you made up your mind what it is best to do ?”

“ If it were not for that child,” he said, turning his anxious face toward Margery’s bed, “ I should not hesitate a moment. But, well and happy as she seems now, I do not think she is very strong, and I ’m afraid of city life for her. If we go to New York, she will have to be shut up in two or three small rooms, and will only be able to go out when father or I can take her. The confinement will be very bad for her, and she will miss her freedom so much that she will never be happy there.”

As he spoke he crossed the room to where Margery lay, and, bending over her, said, softly,—

“Poor little thing!”

“No, it isn’t poor little thing, father,” said she, to his surprise; for he had supposed her asleep. “Why do you say that?”

“Tell her, Thomas, and see what she says,” said Aunt Annie, from the farther side of the room.

“Margery, how would you like to leave this house, and go to New York to live?”

“All of us together, father?”

“Grandpa, and you, and I,—yes.”

“I wouldn’t mind anything but leaving Mr. and Mrs. Thorn and Nettie. I’d just as lief go to New York. It’ll be all the same.”

“You won’t have a pleasant garden to run about in, nor any chickens to feed, nor any flowers. You must be content with two or three small rooms, and you will have to be in-doors a great deal.”

“Will we have a bedroom big enough to hold your bed and this trundle-bed, father?”

“Yes, dear; we will secure that.”

“And a sitting-room where my chair can stand close by yours?”

“Yes, darling; we will have that, too.”

“Then I don’t care where I go,” said Margery, “if I can only keep close by my own dear father.”

“It’s all the better, father,” she went on, after a pause, “to have only one or two little rooms; ’cause I’ll be the housekeeper, you know, when auntie’s gone, and a whole big house might be too much for me. I couldn’t sweep a big house—could I? And then the little rooms will be so cosey, too. Oh, won’t we get near together—you and grandpa and I—when you come home from work in the evening? It’ll be cold, maybe, then, and grandpa and I will have a fire for you, and the best little supper;

and we'll all sit down there, and have the finest time you ever knew. You'll have your little girl, and I'll have my father; and we won't want another thing—will we?"

"No," said Thomas Bray, looking up with a lightened brow; "not another thing, Margery. God bless you, my precious child, and forgive me for my want of faith."

"And you won't be sorry any more about going to New York, father?"

"No, dear; not if you are content to go."

So it was settled that, in the autumn, the house upon the hill should be given up, and they should all go to New York, hoping that there Margery's father might succeed in finding employment enough to enable him to support his family in comfort. Aunt Annie's marriage was put off for a few weeks, in order that she might remain with them until they were comfortably settled in New York.

"It needs a woman's hand," she said, when her brother objected to the delay being made on his account. "It needs a woman's hand to set your new house to rights. I must leave everything in apple-pie order for the little house-keeper."

The lease of the cottage expired on the first of November, and Uncle Will, having some business to attend to in New York about the first of October, undertook to obtain rooms for them. He came back from his visit to town laden with good news. A friend of his—a master-painter—had lost one of his best workmen, and he recommended Thomas Bray to fill his place. The painter, knowing him to be a good judge of such work, had offered to engage Mr. Bray on his recommendation, and he had accepted the situation for him. That being settled, he had gone to look for lodgings, and had found three pleasant rooms, which would be vacated on the first of November. He had done his work well, and he was warmly thanked for it; but the

thanks which he seemed to like best were those which he saw in Margery's eyes when, springing on his knee, she looked up into his face and said,—

“Are all the English uncles as precious as you, Uncle Will?”

CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM.

THOSE three last weeks passed very slowly to Margery, and before they were ended she began to long earnestly for New York. It had been necessary for her father, in fulfilment of the engagement which Uncle Will had made for him, to go at once to the city. As Margery had never before been separated from him for more than a few hours, she found it very hard to wait his home-coming with patience. The first of November fell on Monday, and the plan was that Mr. Bray should return home on Thursday, that Aunt Annie and Uncle Will should be quietly married by Mr. Thorn in the village church on Friday, and that they should all go down to the city together on Monday morning.

But slowly as the time passed to Margery, those three weeks did at last draw to a close, and on Thursday night the little family circle was again unbroken.

When Margery woke on the Sabbath morning, she raised herself on her elbow to see whether it were a pleasant day, and a smile of pleasure lit up her face when she saw the October sun shining in at the windows. It was a beautiful day, and as she walked to the Sunday-school beside her father, the world looked very fair and joyous to her eyes. The air was fresh and bracing, bringing a rich colour into the little face, and a bright light into the brown eyes; the sky was cloudless, and the blue river lay beside them, smooth and clear as a lake.

"Margery," said her father, "what is your lesson for to-day?"

"It's about Jesus rising from the dead, father. Aunt Annie taught it to me yesterday. I wonder if it wasn't a day just like this when Jesus rose?"

"What makes you think so, Margery?"

"Because it seems like this was just the day for something glad to happen. Don't you think so, father?"

"Yes, dear. I like to think that the sun was shining clearly on that blessed morning."

"So do I," said Margery. "Oh, here we are at Sunday-school already! What a short walk it has been!"

That was a very pleasant day to Margery in every way. Her heart was full of joy, and even the thought that to-morrow would find her far away did not dim her happiness. There was only one thing that troubled her, and that was the look of sadness in her grandfather's face. More than once during the church service, as she sat beside her father, she bent forward to glance at him in his seat at the foot of the pew, hoping that the look might have passed away; at length she slipped down, and, passing her father, placed herself between him and the old man. He took no notice of her further than to glance toward her as her father lifted her up beside him, but still sat with his eyes fixed on Mr. Thorn, with that anxious look. By-and-by a little hand stole up, took one of his into its warm, tender grasp, and began to pat it gently. The minister gave out his text, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Margery looked with a smile at her father, and then turned back to her grandfather.

"Grandpa——" she whispered, very softly.

He bent his head to listen.

"Grandpa, that's for you, because you're troubled."

He looked down at her, and the peace and joy which rested on the sweet face seemed to flow from it into his

weary heart; for a sudden smile lit up his whole countenance like a sunbeam, and when it died away there was a change in the furrowed face—a change which even Mr. Thorn noted from the pulpit, as he looked down upon the aged man and the little child, and thought with joy that the precious promise had brought rest to one more heavy-laden soul.

As long as Margery could remember, it had been Aunt Annie's habit on Sunday afternoon to take her on her knee and explain the morning sermon to her. The church was at too great a distance for them to attend both services, and these afternoon lessons had taken the place of the second service. Father and Uncle Will had gone to church, and so the party in the sitting-room was a small one.

"Well, Margery," said Aunt Annie, as the child took her accustomed seat on her knee, "can you tell me what the text was this morning?"

Margery thought a moment.

"I don't think I can tell exactly the words," she said, after a little consideration, "but it means, Come to your dear Lord Jesus when you're tired and troubled, and He'll take all the tired and troubled away. Those aint the Bible words, but that's what it meant. Show me the very words in my Bible, please, Aunt Annie," and she gave her a Testament which she held in her hand. "Oh, yes! those are the words," she said, when her aunt had found the place for her and read the text.

"Isn't it a beautiful one, Aunt Annie? I couldn't understand all Mr. Thorn told us, but it just seemed to me as if God knew how sorry grandpa and father had been, and wanted to comfort them. Don't you know, when I'm tired sometimes, and I feel kind of bad and don't know just what's the matter, how father'll say, 'Come to me, Margery?' He says it different from the way he speaks other times; and then when I do go he just puts my head down on his breast, and I creep up close to him and get a

great deal of comfort. I don't know how it comes, for father never says much those times, but he just holds me, and I lie there and the comfort comes somehow. And it seems to me it's the same with Jesus. He says, 'Come unto me;' and don't you believe, Aunt Annie, that He just wants us to lay our tired heads right down and let Him hold us? Wasn't that what Mr. Thorn meant?"

"Yes, dear, I think it was."

"Isn't it beautiful to think about?" said Margery. "There's so many people want to be comforted, and every one of them can come to Him. There's dear grandpa. He can rest his poor white head on Jesus' breast; and then there's you, Aunt Annie—you aint sorry now, are you? But then people want to tell Jesus all the gladness too; and you'll want to lay your head there, and tell Him how happy you are, and how good He was to give Uncle Will to you. And then here's me. Perhaps I'm most too little to reach up to His breast, but I can kneel down at His feet, and lay my head on His knee, and so look right up in His dear face, and rest there. It's very sweet to think of; isn't it, Aunt Annie?"

It was very sweet to think of—so sweet that Aunt Annie could not find words to answer the little questioner, and could only respond by a kiss.

So they sat there in the rocking-chair until the clock struck five, and Aunt Annie had to go into the kitchen to make ready the supper.

"Annie," said her father, as she rose to leave the room, "if you will move the settle toward the fire I will lie down for a while."

"Are you going to take a nap, grandpa?" asked Margery.

"No; I'm tired, but not sleepy. Come, sit beside me, and I'll tell you a story."

He laid down upon the settle, and Margery, bringing a stool, sat at his side, where she could look into his face.

"Years ago," said grandpa, "many long, long years ago, there lived a boy in a country which was ruled by a great and powerful King. This King was the boy's rightful sovereign, and he had sent a messenger to the lad, telling him that he must set out at once on a journey to a great city, the city in which this King dwelt. The journey was long and difficult, but the King promised aid on the way, and his command was that the boy should undertake it, trusting to his care and guidance. But the command was not obeyed. There were many roads to travel more pleasant far, in the lad's eyes, than that which the King had commanded him to take, and he desired to try them all. Year after year passed on. Still the King's messengers urged him more and more earnestly to obey their Lord's command; now persuading him with promises of love and mercy, now threatening him with punishment for his disobedience: but he turned a deaf ear on all. The boy became a man; but the man lived as the boy had done, in open rebellion against his King. In vain he was told of the loving compassion which would forgive his long disloyalty, if he would but turn and live; in vain the King's messengers told him that the road on which he was travelling would lead him to a land where all was darkness, woe, and despair. He saw all those whom he held nearest and dearest, turning into the safe and pleasant road which led to the King's palace, and still he wandered on alone in the dark road. His hair grew white with age, his limbs feeble and tottering, and still he moved on and on toward that black land which he knew lay before him. In spite of warnings and entreaties, in spite of messages from the King himself, in which he bade the rebel to come unto him, at that eleventh hour even, and receive pardon and peace, the wretched man went on in his folly and sin in the path which leads to death.

"But the King was very merciful. There was in his kingdom a little child, a little fair-haired, brown-eyed fairy,

who loved the great King, and tried with all her feeble strength to walk in the road which led to his palace. And day and night this little one knelt before the great King, and asked him earnestly that his kingdom might spread, and that every rebel against his authority might be led home to his palace, to love and obey him evermore. And the King, in answer to her prayer, sent her to this old man—this rebel who had grown grey in the service of the King's worst enemy. It was a great task for the little fairy child, but she was not afraid, for she knew that her King would aid her. So she came to the old man and whispered in his ear that Jesus—that was the name of the King—that Jesus was troubled when his servants refused to follow him. The words she spoke were very few and simple, but she watched the old man anxiously. She tried to follow her dear Lord very closely, that he might learn from her to tread in the same path, and putting her soft hand into his withered palm, she tried to guide him into that safe road. It was a mighty work for such a tiny labourer; but the little hand never relaxed its grasp, the little feet never wandered from the path without retracing every wrong step, and the little face was set steadily Zionward. Day by day the hard heart softened, day by day the stubborn will yielded more, and at last there came an hour when the old man's sins came home to him with such power, that he turned from the sight in terror of the great King's wrath. As he sat and thought of the punishment which awaited him, one of the King's messengers said, in his hearing, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'That is not for me,' he said mournfully to himself; 'I have rebelled too long.' But, as he said it, the little fairy at his side lifted up her face bright with joy and love, and whispered, 'Grandpa, that's for you; you're troubled.' He knew it must be true. He knew the child had received her message from the Lord of glory. And now, my fairy, my little Margery, whom the great King sent to lead

the rebel into his kingdom, I will answer that question you asked me long ago. I am sorry to have troubled Jesus, and never, God helping me, will I grieve Him more."

He put his arms around her, and she laid her face down beside him on the pillow without a word.

"Are you happy, my darling?"

"Happy, grandpa!" she whispered: "oh, isn't our Jesus too good?"

When Thomas Bray came in from church, he paused at the door to look at the picture before him. The flickering firelight fell upon his child, glowing over her rosy, meditative face, as she sat with one hand supporting her chin, gazing into the fire with a happy, dreamy look; and rising higher lit up the figure of the old man, stretched upon the settle, gleaming in his white hair, and seeming to bring a smile into the sleeping face which had lost its wearied look, and, despite the furrows which age and toil had worn there, was as peaceful as that of the child at his side.

The click of the latch roused Margery from her reverie. She lifted her finger to warn him to be silent, but came quickly forward.

"Grandpa's asleep," she said, softly. "But, O father!" and she laid her cheek to his, as he lifted her in his arms, "didn't I tell you this was the very day for something glad to happen? The kingdom has come, father. Grandpa loves our Lord Jesus."



MARGERYS CITY HOME.

"Thy Will be done as it is in Heaven."

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MARGERY'S CITY HOME.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAIRY IN TROUBLE.

"WHAT a risk for such a child to run!" said a gentleman to himself, as, riding up Broadway in an omnibus, he noticed a little girl who ran from the side-walk and sprang upon the step of the stage.

The next moment he saw the lash of the driver's whip quivering in the air.

"Stop! stop! it is a girl!" he cried out, quickly.

Perhaps the driver did not hear the loud call; at any rate he did not heed it. The heavy lash cut across her thinly-clad shoulders, and the door, flung open, struck her in the back, and threw her violently to the ground.

The gentleman sprang out of the omnibus, and a tall policeman came quickly from the side-walk, for Broadway was thronged with vehicles, and the child lay motionless among the crowding carriages and carts. A number of people gathered around, jostling and pushing one another, to see what was the cause of the excitement; so that when the policeman, having lifted the little girl in his arms, turned to go back to the side-walk, he could scarcely force his way.

"Stand back, there!" he shouted, in a loud voice. "Give her air!"

The crowd swayed as the clear tone of command rang out, but in a moment it had drawn together again; and it was only by dint of thrusting one aside here, and elbowing another back there, that he succeeded in struggling through with his burden.

"Can I help you?" asked a voice; and, looking up, the policeman saw the gentleman whom he had seen descending from the stage.

As he spoke the lips of the child moved; and as if she thought that he had addressed her, she said, feebly,—

"Please, my basket."

"Did she have a basket?"

"I think I did see one go spinning off as she fell," said the officer.

"Please," whispered the pale lips again; "please, my basket. It's got the two cakes the lady gave me. I saved them for my grandfather's supper;" and a pair of dark-brown eyes were lifted pleadingly to the policeman's face.

He looked across the street, and saw, lying in the gutter on the opposite side, an old basket, crushed and broken by the passing wheels.

"Here, youngster," said he, hailing a boy who was pressing toward the inner edge of the ring which encircled him, "fetch that basket, will you?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the boy; and the next moment, dodging between horses, drays, and carriages, he had seized it and brought it to its owner.

"Where's the cakes?" she asked, in the same feeble whisper.

"They're all right," said the boy, peeping under the cover. "They've fell into one corner, and the wheels aint touched them. Hallo!" he exclaimed, as he caught a view of the face resting on the officer's blue sleeve; "if it aint Old Pete's little fairy!"

"Do you know her?" asked the policeman, noticing that the child's eyes had closed, and that the boy's loud recognition had passed unheeded.

"I guess so. She lives in our house, in the basement. Oh, my! won't the old fellow be flustered, though? He sets a heap by that young one. Is she hurt pretty bad?"

"No. She's more frightened than hurt, I guess. Where does she live?"

"Come on, Mister, and I'll show you. It's only a bit from here, in Wooster Street. But it's up a dark alley, and I doubt you wouldn't find it alone."

The policeman smiled at the idea that he could fail to find any house so near his beat, but he only said, "Come, then," and walked off with his light burden; while the boy slung over his shoulder the boot-black's foot-rest which he had carried in his hand, and tramped along beside him, very proud of his position.

As the officer moved away, the gentleman who had spoken to him before said,—

"The child looks very poor. If you find her parents in want you may send them to me;" and he slipped a card, with his name and address on it, into his hand.

"Very well, sir."

"This is the place, Mister," said the boy, pausing at the entrance to a damp court.

Two or three children, who stood there, drew back and gazed in awestruck silence at the tall man carrying their playmate in his arms. As he turned into the alley, and walked rapidly toward the house, they followed, keeping pace as best they could with his long strides.

"I guess likely you'll find the key in her pocket," said the boy. "She mostly carries it with her; and the door is locked."

"Here it is," said the officer, thrusting two of his great fingers into the tiny pocket and drawing out the key. "But aren't any of her people at home?"

"She aint got no people, only old Pete."

"Who is old Pete?"

"Her grand-daddy."

"Hasn't she a mother?"

"No, nor sister, nor nothin', only the old man."

"Then who takes care of her? Who has tidied up this place so neatly?"

They had entered the room. The policeman had laid the child upon the bed, and now stood looking around with a troubled air. The small room was as clean as hands could make it. The bare floor had been nicely swept, the scanty furniture dusted, and set in its place; and the few articles of glass and delft in the open cupboard shone with hard rubbing.

"'Tis herself did it—the little one there. She is but nine year old, but she's the finest housewoman ever you see. She's took all the care of the old man for a year back."

"Well, she must have some one to take care of her, now. I am afraid she is hurt more than I thought."

"I'll call Mrs. Conroy, she'll see to her. Hallo, there, Mrs. Conroy!" he shouted, standing at the foot of the stairs.

"What's wantin', Ned?" asked a voice in a rich Irish brogue.

"You're wantin'," replied the boy. "Margie's got hurted, and an M. P.'s fetched her home."

"What's come to the child?" said Mrs. Conroy, a pleasant, round-faced Irishwoman, hurrying into the room, and bending over Margery with a frightened look. "How happened this?"

"She fell off the steps of an omnibus," said the policeman. "I thought that she was only badly frightened, but I begin to think that I had better take her to the hospital, especially as there seems to be no one to look after her here."

"No, no," said the woman, "don't take her there ;

'twould break the grandfather's heart to be parted from her—so it would. She's fell into a kind of a faint; we'll bring her to, I'm thinking.' There aint no bones broke."

She had been carefully feeling the child's limbs, and now, sending Ned for some water, she began to bathe the white ace upon the pillow.

"There, then, Margie dear, what was it?" she said, tenderly, as the long lashes began to tremble on her cheek. "Was it hurt you was, poor lamb?"

"My basket—my cakes," she whispered, trying to raise herself.

"Lie still now, there's a dear."

"Your cakes are safe," said the policeman; and lifting the crushed basket from the floor where the boy had dropped it, he laid it on the bed beside her. "The basket is broken, but the cakes are all right."

"They're for grandfather's supper," said Margie, looking at Mrs. Conroy.

"Yes, dear. He'll get them. Where are you hurt, Margie?"

"I don't know, but I feel so queer."

"How quare, darlin'? tell Mother Conroy. It is your head it is?"

"No, it's my back. *Oh!*" and she gave a sharp cry of pain as the woman touched her.

"I'll go up to the dispensary and send you a doctor. He can tell whether it is necessary for her to go to a hospital or not," said the policeman. "Can you stay with her for awhile?"

"I can so. We'll see till her betwixt us. The old man'll never listen to takin' her away. She's the very light of his eyes; he'll never hearken to it a ha'porth."

"Well, I will send some one to her; and I'll call in myself in the evening and see how she's coming on. Good-by, little one."

"Good-by, Mister. It was good of you to carry me home," said Margie, as he left the room.

Half an hour after, to Mrs. Conroy's surprise, the dispensary physician came in. It was not often, as she knew by experience, that a call for help was so quickly responded to; for where hundreds are needing immediate assistance, the last comer seldom obtains a speedy answer. But the kind-hearted policeman had interested the doctor so much by his story that the little girl was the first patient he visited.

He looked very grave when he saw her, and graver still when she told him that she felt very tired.

"And my legs won't move," she said, anxiously.

When he left the room he beckoned Mrs. Conroy to follow him.

"You think she's very bad, doctor?" said she.

"Yes. I am afraid she is crippled."

"Crippled is it? Not for the life, sir? don't be tellin' me that."

"I fear it is so. I will come in again to-night. In the meantime be careful to do just as I told you about the medicine; and don't tell the child how much she is injured."

"What did the doctor say, Mrs. Conroy?" asked Margie, as the woman re-entered the room.

"Oh, he didn't say nothin', dear! only tell me to give you the physic, and to rub your poor back."

"Yes, he did say something more," said Margie, confidently. "It isn't right to tell a story, Mrs. Conroy."

"Now, never you mind, Margie. Just lie down, and go you to sleep. Then you'll waken a deal better, perhaps."

"I'll have to know some time," said the child, looking up with a very wise, old expression on her young face. "You might just as well tell me now."

"Faith, but you're an old-fashioned little thing as ever

I see. Well, then, he did say as maybe you might be a bit lame for a week or so. But you needn't mind that; we'll take care of you."

"Oh, dear! and who'll mind my house?" said Margery.

"Don't you trouble your head about that, darlin'. Rosy and me'll see to the house. We'll see the old man gets a pick at somethin' to eat, and a cup of tay, too."

Mrs. Conroy tried to laugh, but the attempt was feeble, for her kindly heart was filled with pity for the crippled child, worrying already, at nine years old, with the cares and anxieties of a woman.

"The house," a room fourteen feet by sixteen, weighed heavily upon her mind now that she felt herself useless. But in a moment her thoughts turned to an object far dearer.

"And grandfather's cakes; you won't forget them, Mrs. Conroy?"

"What cakes then, dear? I heard the policeman discoursin' about cakes, but I didn't see them. Will they be in the basket?"

"Yes. A lady in the street gave them to me, and I saved them for my grandfather."

"He'll get them, honey. Now I'll send Rosy to bide with you; and you'll just take a sleep while I see to my man's dinner."

She smoothed the pillow beneath her head, and left her. The child lay for awhile looking listlessly around the dreary room, and finally sank into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTOR'S VISIT.

ABOUT seven o'clock that evening old Peter Bray came walking slowly up the street, carrying on his shoulders a

large placard, on which was printed in huge, red letters, the word "B E S T." He was one of six old men who carried these placards advertising "Brook's best coffee, for family use," and the word which fell to Peter was "Best."

As he toiled on, wearied with his long tramp up and down Broadway since early morning, it made his heart glad to think of the little girl whom he hoped soon to see springing and dancing to meet him. He thought of her as he had seen her that morning, running about nimbly on her bare feet, preparing his breakfast, putting the kettle on the fire which he had kindled, spreading the table, and making the tea with all the gravity of a grown woman. She was a treasure to him, this delicate child of nine years old. They were a strange pair to be left solitary, save for each other, in the world. An old man of over eighty linked to a child of nine years.

But he had reached the entrance to the alley, and no Margery had come tripping out to meet him. He looked up and down the street before he entered the court, but not seeing her, went in.

"I say, old Pete, your gal's been brought home by an M. P.!" shouted a voice from one of the upper windows of the tenement.

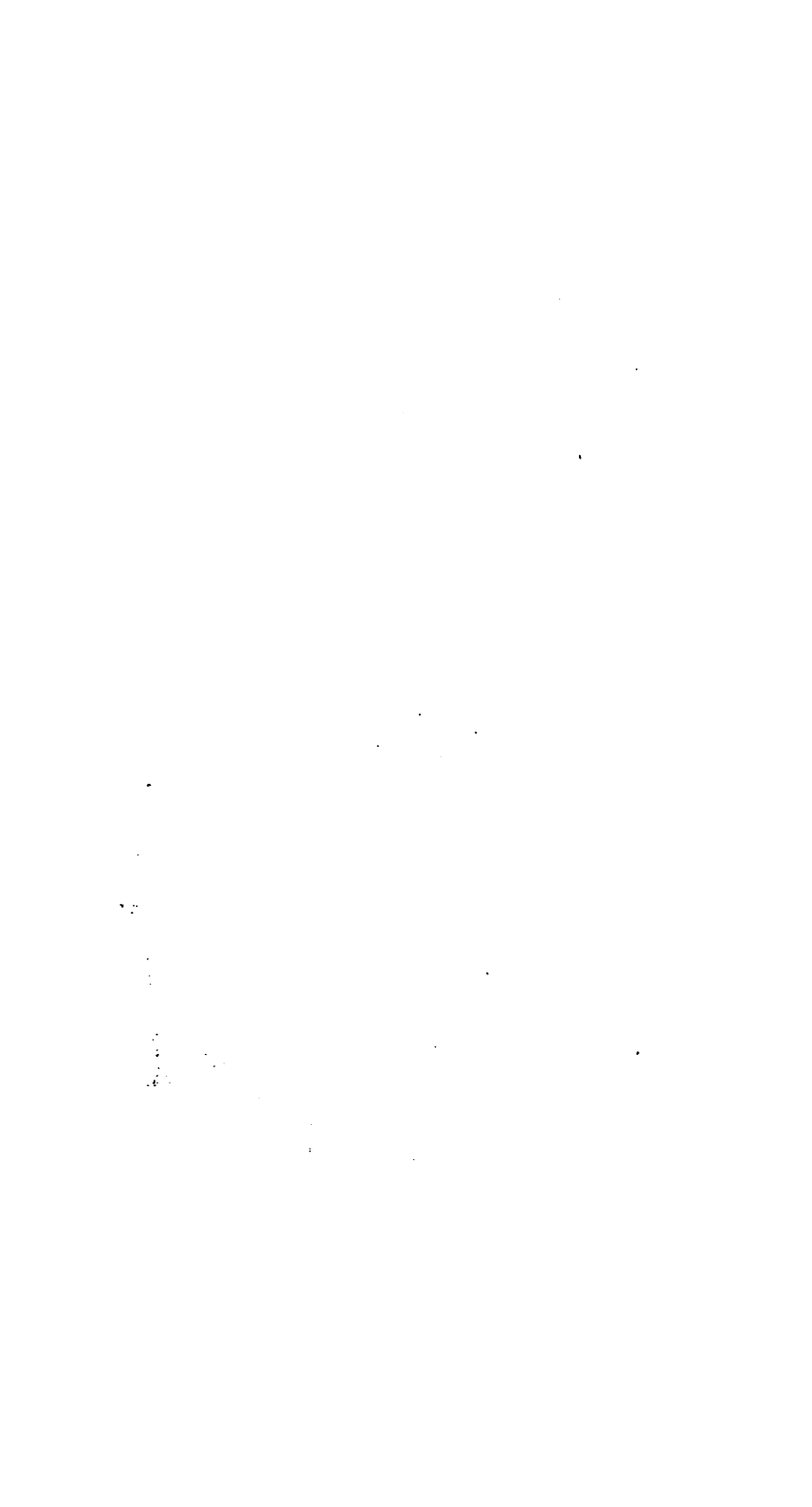
The old man glanced up anxiously, but seeing only a boy who made a daily practice of teasing and annoying him, passed on without noticing what he said.

"Where's the fairy?" he asked, in a voice that quavered with age and weakness, as he opened the door of his room.

It was a pretty name for her. Slight and fragile, yet full of life and energy, bright and merry as a bird, she seemed to this fond old man like something different from all other children, and he always called her by this pet name.

"Where's the fairy?" he repeated, receiving no answer.

The next moment he had placed his burden against the wall, and hurrying across the room as fast as his trembling





"Just then a door behind him opened, and Mrs. Charoy came in."—P. 125.



limbs could carry him, bent over the bed and gazed in frightened wonder at the child.

She was sleeping heavily. Her face was very pale, and her forehead drawn as if in pain.

He had seen her last, standing at the entrance to the alley, where she had gone with him to give him a last kiss. "To make him strong for his long walk," she had said. He had looked back at her as she stood there, her brown hair floating in the wind, her face rosy with the cold morning air, poised on one foot, and with her hand on either wall to support herself as she leaned out to catch the last glimpse of him. She had looked so bright and beautiful to those dim old eyes. And now, what could ail her, lying here alone, in evident suffering?

Just then the door behind him opened, and Mrs. Conroy came in.

"Ah, Peter Bray, it's yourself, then, is it?" she said, in a whisper. "Margie's got hurt a bit. Don't you be afeard now. She'll be better by-and-by."

And then she told him all that she knew of Margery's accident, trying to make as light of it as she could.

"Don't you be frettin'," she said kindly, "Just you go up to my room and get your bit and sup, while I bide with Margie. My man is takin' his supper now, go you up and help him."

But Peter would not leave the child, so she brought a cup of tea and a couple of slices of bread and bacon down to him.

"Come now, take a settin' and pick a bit," said she, placing the plate on the table. "It won't do to lave eatin', you know, Mr. Bray. If the little one should get bad, she'll need you to take care of her. You must kape up the strength for her sake."

So he sat down at the table and tried to obey, but he could not eat; the bread seemed to choke him, and even Margery's cakes, which Mrs. Conroy placed beside him,

failed to tempt him. He drank the tea, but rose from the table having scarcely tasted the food ; and she saw that it was useless to press him.

"Well," she said in her cheery, pleasant voice, "I'll be goin' my ways. There's the young ones to put to their beds, and the father to see to. If you're wantin' me you'll just holler."

Peter sat beside the bed to watch the child, but at that moment a knock on the door roused her, and when her grandfather said "Come in," a gentleman entered.

"It's the doctor," said Margery, trying to raise herself.

"Lie still, lie still," said he, coming toward her. "Good evening," with a bow to the old man. "Is this the little girl's grandfather whom the woman upstairs mentioned?"

"Yes, sir. Is she very bad, sir?"

"Oh, she'll do," said the doctor, lightly, with a look at Peter, which Margery understood more quickly than he.

"You needn't be afraid to tell before me," she said, earnestly. "Please to let me know if I am going to be lame."

"You want to know all about it, eh? I am afraid that you may be lame for some time; but we'll see about that. How do you feel?"

"I've had a long sleep, and I feel as if my feet was lost."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't know how to say it; but it seems as if they wasn't anywhere."

The doctor slipped his hand beneath the quilt, which had been thrown over her, and laid it heavily on her slender ankles.

"Does that hurt you?"

"Does what hurt?" asked Margery.

"My hand on your feet;" and he pressed more firmly upon them.

- "It isn't there."

"Yes it is. See,"—and throwing back the coverlid he showed his strong hand bearing with all its power upon her bare ankles.

"No, it don't hurt; it don't feel at all."

A half-sob choked her voice as she spoke; she was growing frightened. But she caught a glimpse of her grandfather's startled face, and laying her hand on his, as it rested on the bed, she said, hopefully,—

"Never mind, grandfather. He says it's only for a while."

"That's a good girl!" said the doctor. "Does your back ache very badly?"

"Yes, it does ache pretty much."

"Mrs. Conroy must bathe it with that liniment. I will come to see you to-morrow. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Margery, cheerfully.

But when her grandfather had followed the doctor from the room she struggled up on her elbow, although the movement gave her great pain, and, bending forward, listened eagerly.

"I am afraid that she will never walk again. I think that her limbs are paralyzed," said the doctor.

Margery did not understand the last sentence, but she understood the first, and her heart sank within her. But her grandfather was coming; he must not see her look sad. She smiled at him as he came in, and he tried to smile back, but it would not do; and the old man, weaker than the sick child, laid his head down upon the bed with a groan.

"Poor grandfather!"

The little hand stroked his white hair softly; then it stole down to pat his wrinkled face.

"Poor grandfather!"

When she said it the second time, he raised his head and tried to speak.

"Don't tell me, grandfather; I know I can't be your little woman any more."

"Oh, my Margery!" he said, "my fairy! You will never dance in the sunlight again."

"No, grandfather; but we won't be afraid. The good God will look after us. He was very kind not to let me be killed to-day. He didn't take your Margery away. He let me live; not to take care of you any more," her voice quavered, in spite of herself, at the thought of relinquishing that precious duty, "but to love you, and for you to love. Don't cry, dear grandfather. See, I don't cry. You know Jesus told us to say, 'Thy will be done.'"

His manhood, worn-out and feeble as it was, was shamed by her courage. He lifted himself up, and tried to force down his sorrow out of her sight, into the depths of his own heart.

"No, Fairy," he said, as soon as he could speak, "you don't cry. You are a brave girl. And we will trust the good Lord. He has always taken care of us before, and He will now. But, oh, why should He send us this?"

"There's the reason, grandfather."

She pointed to the placard which fronted her, as it leaned against the wall where he had placed it when he came in. His eyes followed the pointing finger.

"B E S T."

"It was best, or God wouldn't have let it happen. That is what my teacher said last Sunday, Oh, I can't go to Sunday-school any more!"

The thought broke her down. Her womanly fortitude gave way, and clinging to him she sobbed, and sobbed, the more violently for the restraint which she had before put upon herself.

She was but a little child after all. Placed by God's hand in a position of authority rather than of dependence, the support rather than the charge of this feeble old man, her powers of endurance and her self-reliance had been

strangely developed: but she was, after all, only a little child. And so she lay there in her grandfather's arms, crying as if her heart would break, until, perfectly exhausted, she fell asleep.

By-and-by he laid her upon the pillow, and stretched himself upon the floor beside her. His heart was heavy, for they were very poor, his scanty earnings being their sole dependence; and Margery must have medicines, and nourishing food. But after a while her words came to his mind,—“The good God will look after us;” and as he thought on them his weary eyes closed, and the old man and the little child, alike weak and helpless, slept side by side.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOLDIER'S MESSAGE.

It was late in the day after Margery's accident. She had been alone almost all day. Mrs. Conroy had come in early in the morning to put things to rights for her, but then she had gone out to work, and had not yet returned. Rosy had peeped in at her when she came from school, but she had not stayed long, and the time had passed very wearily for Margery.

Her grandfather had left her very unwillingly; but he knew that he should lose his place if he were absent even for a day, and he dared not run such a risk. The long hours had been very tedious to him, too, as he walked up and down the crowded streets, thinking of the lonely child at home; and many a kind heart was touched by the look of patient sadness in the old man's face, and more than one generous hand slipped money into his palm that morning.

By-and-by, as Margery lay listening for her grandfather's tread in the yard, she thought she heard it, and

she lifted her head so that she might catch it more easily. There was a step coming up the alley, but it was too firm and strong for Peter Bray. It came nearer, sprang down the two or three wooden stairs which led to the basement door, crossed the narrow entry, and then some one knocked at her door.

"Come in," said Margery, wondering who it could be.

Who should it be but her friend of the day before; the policeman who had carried her home!

"Well, how are you coming on here?" he asked, as he came forward to take the hand eagerly stretched toward him. "Does the doctor think that you are much hurt?"

"He says I'll never walk again," said Margery. "He told me what was the reason, but I couldn't understand the words; only he meant that my legs was kind of dead. I won't ever be able to move them any more."

The burst of sorrow and distress which had shaken her the night before was past. She spoke as quietly as the doctor had done when, in answer to her earnest inquiries that morning, he had told her the whole truth. The policeman looked at her in wonder. This mite of a child taking up the burden of life with such strong resolution and patience was a riddle to him.

"You take it pretty easy," he said.

"I felt dreadful bad at first," said Margery. "But it was the good God let it happen. If it hadn't been best for me to be lame, He would have kept me well."

"Who taught you that lesson?"

"My Sunday-school teacher and my father."

"Where is your father?"

"He is dead."

Margery's voice fell very low as she said those words. She paused a moment, then went on:—

"He was a soldier. He was wounded at Fredericksburg, and died a few days after. Here is what he sent me."

She put her hand beneath her pillow and drew out a pocket-book, worn and stained.

"That is his corps badge," she said, taking from it a Maltese cross. "He sent it to me by another soldier; and he sent this bit of paper. He was dying when he wrote it, and so it is hard to read; but grandfather and I spelt it out, and now I can say it by heart,—'Good-by, my little Margie. Take care of grandfather, and cling close to your Saviour.'"

"He must have been a good father," said the policeman.

"Yes, he was the best father. We cried very hard, grandfather and I, when he went away. I was only eight years old then. Look there, what he painted for me. He was a painter, and he made me a great many pictures; but I like that best of all."

She pointed to a picture hanging on the wall. Two flags crossed, and floating above them a white banner with a cross upon it.

"When he went away he lifted me up in his arms and let me hang that picture up in our other house—we didn't live here then—and he said, 'Margie, stand fast by the flag, and by the only banner which must ever float above it.'"

There was a sound of a shuffling step in the yard, and the sad look on Margery's face changed in an instant.

"There's my grandfather!" she said, joyously.

Peter Bray paused at the door, looking in surprise at the unknown visitor.

"This is the policeman who brought me home yesterday, grandfather. But I don't know your name," she added, turning to her new friend.

"My name is John Hardy," he said, smiling, as he rose to shake hands with Peter Bray. "You have a smart little granddaughter here, sir."

"Yes, yes, she's a good child; but she's in a pretty bad way now. How have you passed the day, Fairy?"

"Pretty well, but it was rather long," said Margery. "I wanted to get up and sweep the floor and get your supper."

"Do you do all that?" asked John Hardy. "Such a little thing as you are?"

"Indeed she does," replied the grandfather. "She's done it for a year past, and she's but nine years old."

"She tells me that she lost her father at Fredericksburg," said the policeman, gently.

"Yes, sir, that's true. He was the last I had, and the good Lord called him away, too. Not ten years ago I had four likely sons; but they've all been called home before the old father. And now this new sorrow has come to us, and the little one is laid by. Ah, you should have seen her when she was herself—the sprightliest, merriest child on God's earth; and the best worker, too. Why she'd be up in the morning early, and before seven o'clock she'd have the floor swept and the room cleaned up as neat as a new pin. By nine she'd have the breakfast cleared away and herself nice and sweet for the school. And when I'd come home of an evening, here she'd sit with her book or her bit of sewing, the table spread for our supper, and the kettle on the fire, waiting for me. I call her my fairy, for she's a marvel to me; so small and slight, yet so full of strength and wit for her years. Ah, that's what she was; but she's broke down now. God help her!"

"Don't fret, grandfather; don't fret." She spoke soothingly, as if he had been the child and she the parent. "We shall do very nicely."

"Did your son leave you very poor?" asked Hardy, thinking of the card which had been intrusted to him.

"He left us a small sum, expecting to keep us along with his pay; but he was killed in his first battle, and I was robbed of what little was due him. The day I drew it I was very tired, and, riding up in the cars, I fell asleep, and when I waked my money was gone. Then I fell sick.

What with the grief and the loss of the money and all, I gave way ; and this child nursed me through months of illness. When I got well, the money my boy had left us was all gone for doctor's pay and medicines. We had to leave the rooms where we had lived while he was with us, and a kind friend of mine, who owns this house, lets us live here rent free. If it wasn't for him we'd have to go to the poorhouse ; for I could never earn enough to pay even a small rent. 'Tis all I can do to feed us."

"You have had a hard time of it," said the visitor. "Perhaps I can help you. A gentleman in the street gave me this card yesterday, and told me that, if you were in want, you might apply to him."

He took out the card ; but Peter Bray drew back, and his face flushed, as he said,—“I have never come to that yet, and I never will if I can help it. I live here paying no rent. Of course that is charity, and may God reward him who shelters me and my child ; but I have never begged. Keep the card, Mr. Hardy ; we will try to fight it out yet, without asking any help but God's."

There was a something grand in the old man's look and manner, as he refused the offered aid, which touched Hardy with admiration.

"Well, you know where to find it, if you make up your mind to use it," he said, replacing the card in his pocket-book. "Now I must say good-night. I shall come in again, little one—may I?"

"Oh, yes ; please do !" said Margie.

John Hardy went out, wondering how it was that such a feeble pair should be so ready to do battle with the world, asking no aid from any human power. He did not know, because he had never felt it himself, that there is a strength which is strongest in our weakness,—that strength which God gives to His people in the time of their need.

He was a kind-hearted, easy-tempered man ; the world had always been a pleasant place for him ; and, strong in

his young manhood, he had never felt the need of higher strength. It seemed to him, as he looked at Margery lying there helpless, with no one to care for her but that old man, himself almost as weak as she, that the child's heart must sink within her at the thought of what lay before them; yet she had not seemed to fear.

She had said, "Don't fret, grandfather," in a cheery voice, as if she had not the smallest dread of the future.

And it was not childish thoughtlessness which prevented her from seeing and feeling the truth. She was too old and wise in all her ways to allow him to suppose that. No, she saw distinctly all that her life promised of poverty and hardship, and yet, child as she was, she did not fear to meet it. The more he thought of it, the more he wondered. John Hardy had a lesson yet to learn from Peter Bray's crippled little fairy.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND FOUND.

WITH a very thoughtful look on his face the policeman walked down the street, trying to make up his mind how he could best aid this strange couple in whom he had become so suddenly interested. By-and-by he took the card from his pocket again, glanced at it, and then, changing his pace from a slow, deliberating walk, to a quick, determined step, he passed through the narrow, dirty street, and turned toward the more respectable part of the city.

Half-an-hour after he was ringing the door-bell of a handsome house up-town.

"Is Mr. Raymond in?" he asked of the man who opened the door.

Just as he put the question, a gentleman came toward them from a room which opened from the hall. He looked

curiously at the man, who, recognizing him at once, had stepped forward.

"Ah," said he, as the light from the hall-lamp fell on John Hardy's face; "I know you now: it is the policeman to whom I gave my card yesterday. Come in."

He led him into the room which he had just left. It was a cosy, pleasant place, lighted by a great wood fire blazing on the wide hearth. A young lady, who was sitting in an arm-chair in the glow of the dancing flames, rose to leave the room as they entered.

"Don't go, Lily," said Mr. Raymond. "This is the policeman who took care of that little girl of whom I was telling you yesterday. I suppose," he added, turning to him, "that they have sent you to me for help. Is the child much hurt?"

"Yes, sir; the doctor says that she is crippled. Her spine is badly injured by the blow she received from the door of the omnibus. But, although I have come to you for help, I must not let you think that they have asked it. The child lives alone with her grandfather, who is her only relative. The old man earns a few shillings a-week by carrying one of those placards which you may see in the streets nowadays. That is all they have to depend upon, even now, when the child is sick, and needs—the doctor says—strong nourishment. But I have called on you, Mr. Raymond, on my own responsibility. They scorn the idea of begging; but, if they are not assisted, it seems to me they will starve. So I was bold enough to take the matter into my own hands, sir."

"I am glad you did so," said Mr. Raymond, pleased by his visitor's frank, hearty manner. "Where do these people live, and what is their name?"

"Their name is Bray, and they live in Wooster Street."

"Why, father," exclaimed the young lady, who had been listening attentively to John's urging of his cause;

"can that be my Margery Bray? She lives in Wooster Street."

"Her name is Margery, madam," said John. "She is a small, slightly-made child, nine years old."

"It must be the same," said Miss Raymond. "She is in my Sunday-school class. My poor child! I will go to see her at once. Father, can you take me there now?"

"Not to-night, Lily. You could do her no good by going this evening. We will see her in the morning. It is strange that she should turn out to be one of your scholars. If they need help to-night," he said, turning to the policeman, "I can send them assistance. Are you going that way?"

"Yes, sir, I must return to that neighbourhood; but I do not think it necessary to do anything before morning, and I should much prefer that you should satisfy yourself of the truth of my story before you trust me with your charity. You have nothing but my word to depend upon, you know, sir."

"Yes, I know that," said Mr. Raymond, smiling. "But I am not afraid that my money would be lost if I did place it in your hands."

"Thank you, sir," replied Hardy, colouring with pleasure; "I am glad to have gained your confidence: but, if I may say so, I think it would be better for the young lady to see the child. I would not like to have them know that I spoke to you, and it would seem quite natural that Margery's Sunday-school teacher should interest herself in her. I should be glad to help them myself, but my salary will not allow me to do much, as I have already my mother and six young brothers and sisters to support."

"You have done quite right in coming to me," said Mr. Raymond. "I will take care that they do not hear of your visit, if you say so. We will see in the morning that the child is made comfortable."

"I feel that I ought to thank you personally for attending

to my scholar," said the young lady, coming forward and taking the man's hard hand. "You have been very kind."

"I've done nothing but my duty, madam," said John. "I couldn't leave the little thing to die for want of proper food and care."

"We will see that she has both," said Miss Raymond.

Then John Hardy bade them good-night and went out.

"What an open, honest face that man has!" said Miss Raymond, when she and her father were alone.

"Yes, he laughed at my willingness to trust a stranger. I suppose that a policeman learns too much for that; but I could not help confiding in that manly, trusty look of his."

CHAPTER V.

MISS RAYMOND.

It seemed as if a flood of sunlight had rushed into Margery's room the next morning, when, hearing a knock on her door, she said, "Come in," and Miss Raymond entered. Never was little girl more glad to welcome any friend.

"Oh, my dear Miss Raymond!" she said; "oh, I'm so very glad!"

"And so you are sick, Margery! I am sorry to see you lying here," said the lady, placing a basket which she had carried in her hand upon the table, and seating herself by the bedside.

"How did you find out about it?" asked Margery.

"My father was in the omnibus from which you fell, and when we were talking of it last night, I discovered that the little girl whom he had seen hurt was my Mar-

gery. And I thought that she would like to see me. Was I right?"

"You know you were right," said Margery, looking up lovingly into the sweet face which bent above her.

"And now, I want to know how much you are hurt, and all about it."

"I'm hurt very bad, Miss Raymond. The doctor says I'll never walk any more. I wouldn't mind it so very much if it wasn't for my grandfather; but what am I going to do with him?"

"You must not trouble yourself about that, dear. He will be taken care of. The good Father knows what is best for us all. This is a very hard trial for you; but I am sure that my Margery knows that it must be best for her, or God would not have sent it."

"Yes, I do know that, Miss Raymond; and yet it seems so strange. When grandfather is so old and so weak, how can it be good for him to take away all the help he's got? How can it be good for me to be a burden, instead of a comfort to him? Sometimes, when I shut up my eyes and don't look at poor old grandfather and the lonely room, nor at myself lying here, I don't feel so afraid to think; but, oh, I have to shut them very, very tight. If I get even a little peep at grandfather when he isn't looking at me, it frightens me to think of what will become of him."

"But, Margie, that is not trusting God, dear. God loves your grandfather even better than you do. We must not feel, because we cannot understand Him, that He does not understand us. Don't you remember in our lesson last Sunday that verse in which it said, after telling how Lazarus' sisters had sent for the Saviour, 'Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus? When He had heard, *therefore*, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was;' as if His love for them was the very reason of His apparent neglect of their prayer.

I expect that poor Mary and Martha thought this very strange; but the Saviour was not ready to answer their prayer just then. He wanted to show the unbelieving Jews His great power; and so He let Lazarus die, that by dying he might be the means of bringing glory and honour to the Saviour's name. Perhaps, Margery, Jesus means that this heavy trial of yours shall glorify Him; perhaps He loves you so much that He has laid you down upon this weary bed, in order that you may do something for Him. Would not that be a great joy for you?"

For a moment the child lay quiet, awed by the solemn thought; then she said softly,—

"Miss Raymond, aint I almost too little?"

"No, no one is too small to serve the Saviour if He chooses to use one. Why, Margery, you might be a missionary in this dark alley. You could teach every child here about the Lord Jesus. You will have more influence now, lying weak and helpless, than you could possibly have had if you had remained well and strong. Perhaps, dear, this is just what the Master has laid you down here for."

"Perhaps it is," said Margery, in a very grave tone. "Miss Raymond, I'm sorry I asked Him to let me get well if He don't want me to. Last night I was pretty contented, but this morning I felt very bad about it when I saw poor grandfather getting his own breakfast, and I asked Jesus very hard to let me get well; oh, I asked Him very, very hard. Was that bad of me?"

"No, dear. We must ask Him for all we want, but still, we must try to say, 'God's will be done!' Can you say that, Margery?"

"Yes, I can now. O Miss Raymond, I'd be so glad if the dear Saviour would let me be His missionary. Do you really think He will?"

"Yes, I am sure He will. And now, will you try to remember, when you begin to feel troubled and anxious,

that Jesus has placed you here because He needs to have you just in this very place; and that if He takes away one help from your grandfather, He will be sure to give him another; that He knows what is best for him as well as for you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will try," said Margery, hopefully.

"And now we must see what is in this basket," said Miss Raymond. "Isn't it time for you to be hungry?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; not till noon."

"What did you eat for your breakfast?"

"I didn't want anything then, ma'am."

"Then I should say it was time for you to be hungry. Now I am going to play house with you. You are to be my mistress, and I am to be your servant, and cook your dinner. Please, ma'am, where shall I find a plate?"

"In that cupboard, ma'am," said Margery, with a shy laugh.

"You must not say 'ma'am,' to your cook, Mrs. Bray. Ah! here are the plates."

"I'm afraid," said Margery, apologetically, "that you won't find them very clean. Rosy Conroy washed them, and she is such a heedless child. She broke a plate and a cup this morning. I'm afraid she'll be a great cost to me if she doesn't learn to be careful."

Miss Raymond could not help smiling. Rosy Conroy was in her Sunday-school class, and she knew that she was quite as old, if not older, than Margery.

"Well, Mrs. Bray," she said, "I'll wash the dishes this time, and I promise not to break anything. Now I want a bowl, ma'am."

So Margery told her where to find one, laughing now merrily enough to show that, wise and thoughtful as she was, she could enjoy a frolic as well as any other child.

When Miss Raymond had reached down the bowl from the shelf, she took out of her basket a bottle, nicely cased in wicker-work, the contents of which she poured into a

tin cup, which she placed on the stove. Then she took out some thin, crisp crackers, which she put on the plate.

"I'll have your dinner ready in a moment, Mrs. Bray," she said, as she stirred the liquid in the cup. "It will be hot very soon."

When it was ready, she brought it to the bed, first spreading a white napkin on the quilt.

"Do you like beef-tea, Margery?" she asked, as she placed the bowl beside her.

"I don't know, ma'am. I never tasted it."

"Then try it now. Wait a moment, and I will feed you."

She put one arm around her, and raised her up. The nice hot tea and the fresh crackers tasted very good, for the little girl had scarcely eaten anything since her accident. Bread and bacon did not tempt her weak appetite, and her grandfather had nothing better to give her.

"There, Mrs. Bray," said Miss Raymond, as she laid her back upon the pillow, "I think that you will feel better now. If I bring or send you another bottle of soup to-morrow, will you promise to eat it all, as you have done to-day?"

"O Miss Raymond, it is too much trouble for you. This is plenty; I don't think I'll want any more to-morrow."

"I don't think you know anything about it, Mrs. Bray. Here is a form of jelly which you must eat. This is medicine; it doesn't taste very badly, but it will make you stronger."

Margery looked into her face, with her brown eyes full of tears.

"What a dear, good teacher you are!" she said, tremulously.

"Am I? I am very glad you think so. There comes my father up the alley. He said that he should come back in an hour for me; so I must go. Come in,

father," she said, opening the door for him. "This is Margery."

"I am very sorry to see you so ill, my little girl," said the gentleman, bending over her.

"Oh, don't say you're sorry, sir," said the child. "Miss Raymond says that my Saviour must have laid me here because I could do something for Him here that I couldn't do anywhere else. I aint going to be sorry about it any more. And she says He's going to let somebody see to grandfather. But, Miss Raymond——"

"Well, dear?"

"God has never sent any jelly before, so I don't think He'll send it very soon again, and I'd like grandfather to have this."

"You may give him the half of it, if you will eat the other half."

"That will do. He wouldn't take it all. He never will eat anything good unless I have half, or more."

"Then share it with him. You can play tea-party with it. Good-by; I will try to see you to-morrow."

She kissed her and went out, leaving the child, whom she had found sorrowful and distressed, full of hope and peace.

She had done very little. One short hour had been spent in the service of this young disciple, yet He who has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me," saw and accepted the offering. A child's aching heart comforted, a child's tears turned to smiles, a child's wavering faith confirmed and strengthened,—she thought but little of it all; but there was One who thought of it, and wrote it in the book of His remembrance, that she might "in no wise lose her reward."

CHAPTER VI.

MARGERY'S FIRST EFFORT.

"Rosy," said Margery, the next Saturday morning, when they were alone together in her room, "I want to have a Sunday-school here to-morrow."

Rosy was standing on a stool by the table, with her chubby arms elbow-deep in a tin basin of suds, in which she was washing the dishes that had been used for breakfast. She turned quickly round, splashing the water all over herself and the table as she did so, and fixing her laughing eyes on Margery's face with a wondering look, said,—

"A Sunday-school here! in this room, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"And who'll be the teacher?"

"I will," said Margery, gravely.

For a moment the blue eyes stared at her in silent amazement; and then, clapping her hands together, Rosy broke into a peal of merry laughter.

"And who'll you teach?" she asked, as soon as she could speak.

"Any one who'll come to me. You needn't think it so funny, Rosy dear. I'm in earnest."

"But, Margery," said Rosy, somewhat sobered by her seriousness, "you are too little to teach. You don't know nothing."

"I know that Jesus is our dear Saviour, and I can tell other people that. That is what all Sunday-schools are for. They're only to teach children to love Him. I think I can do that if He will help me, and I'd like to try. Will you help, too?"

"Oh, I couldn't teach nobody," said Rosy, her eyes twinkling again at the thought. "I'm all the time laughing, you know; I'd spoil everything."

"But you could get me some scholars. Can't you ask some of the children who don't go to Sunday-school to come?"

"Why, Margie, they'd only tease me! Just think how I'd laugh if anybody asked me to go to school to a little girl!"

"If they told you that the little girl was lame, and that she was lonely and wanted some one to talk to, would you laugh then?"

"Oh, no; I guess I'd go."

"And so would the others. Won't you ask them?"

"Well; maybe I will. Who'll I ask?"

"Your brother Will, and Edward Dolan, and——"

She was going to enumerate several others, but Rosy's look of dismay stopped her.

"Those big boys!" she exclaimed: "they won't come."

"You must coax them, Rosy."

"Oh, I wouldn't like to; they'll make fun. I'll ask some girls."

"I'll tell you what to do," said Margery, whose heart was set on asking Edward Dolan: "you tell the boys that I want to see them to-night, when they come home. I will tell them all about it myself. Will you?"

"Yes; but, Margery, I can't see how you'll teach those big fellows, and you so little."

"I don't know much, but the Lord Jesus knows a great deal, and He'll teach me what to say. The first Sunday I'm going to tell them all about Him. I don't mean all the things He did, but just about His own self."

"And how will you say it?" said Rosy. "It's very easy to think of, but it's so hard to tell it right out. Somehow the words won't come. Often in Sunday-school, when Miss Raymond asks me something I know what she

means, and I know what I mean, too,' and yet I can't get at it to say it."

"Yes, I feel so too, sometimes," said Margery. "But I guess the Lord Jesus will help me to tell the children about Him, 'cause He likes to have everybody know. I'll try, anyway. And you won't forget to ask the boys, Rosy?"

"No, I won't forget. But I don't think they'll come," said the unbelieving little Rosy.

"I think Ned will, because I've asked God to make him."

"Does God always do what you ask Him?"

"If it's good for me He does; and I think it will be very good to teach Ned to love the Lord Jesus."

Rosy did not answer. She thought that romping, wild Ned Dolan, would not be a very apt scholar; but she did not say so, for fear that it should grieve her friend. She went away when the dishes were washed and the room set in order, promising to do what she could to win both of the boys.

In the afternoon she went to Margery in great delight, with the result of her efforts.

"O Margie," she said, "I've got four scholars for you! Three girls and a boy. Will won't come. When I told him, he only said, 'You get along with your nonsense!' But don't let's mind him; we'll have a real nice school without him."

Rosy's success had made her look upon this new idea with very different feelings from those which she had entertained in the morning.

"And Ned? Did you ask him?"

"I saw him just now, but I didn't tell him about the Sunday-school. I only said, 'Ned, Margie wants you to go into her house to-night.' And he said he'd come when he'd cleaned up a bit."

"I knew he would," said Margery.

"How did you know?"

"I kind of felt it. This morning, after you went away, I was thinking how you said you didn't believe he'd come, and I felt so bad I cried. And all of a sudden somebody seemed to say, 'Margie, if you want to work for your Saviour you mustn't fret because you can't do just as you choose about it. If He wants Ned to come He'll send him.' I didn't cry any more after that, but I've kind of felt as if he'd come to-morrow. Don't you think that God will see it best for Ned to be a good boy, Rosy?"

"Seems as if He would—don't it?" said Rosy, reflectively.

"Yes. But whether he comes or not, we mustn't be disappointed. Whatever happens we'll know it's all right,—else God wouldn't have it so."

"Do you think so, Margie? That's what Miss Raymond says; and when I'm sitting listening to her I try to feel so, too. But then, when I see so many strange things, I can't understand it. There's such lots of people who have such hard times. Why does God let there be so much trouble?"

"I can't tell. I don't understand it very good, myself. But I *know* it."

"I like to hear you say that," said Rosy, who had crossed her arms upon the bed, and, with her chin resting upon them, sat gazing into her friend's face. "It seems different from when Miss Raymond says it. She's a grown-up lady, and she knows so much; but you're a little girl like me, and it seems so kind of different when you say it."

She had her hours of thoughtfulness, this merry, careless child,—hours when her young brain strove hard to master the perplexing questions which came up before her in her daily life; and this was one of them. Margery's earnestness had infected her. The little cripple had, unconsciously,

already begun the work which her Master had allotted to her.

For an hour they talked together,—two young pilgrims on the journey of life, seeking to find out the strait path, and to walk faithfully in it. Perhaps Rosy did not quite know what she sought; but there were in her heart to-night thoughts and feelings which had never stirred it so strongly before,—a chaos of half-formed purposes, of indefinite plans, a desire to do and to be something better—while yet the resolution to set about the task was not fully taken. Where all these new feelings and impulses had sprung from she could not have told, but something made her cling with a new fondness and love to Margery.

A veil had been drawn slightly aside. She had had a glimpse of a life higher, nobler, holier than her own, and her innocent heart turned at once toward the new light. One drop from a pure, fresh spring had touched her lips. She did not know that she was thirsting for the water of life; but its cool sweetness refreshed her, and she turned her face toward it. Her feet were not yet firmly planted in the road which leads to the living fountain, but they were tending thitherward.

CHAPTER VII.

EDWARD'S VISIT.

EDWARD DOLAN was rather surprised by the invitation which Rosy gave him to visit Margery. He knew the child, having seen her often playing in the street; but, beyond having spoken together a few times, they had no acquaintance with each other. But he had a sort of liking for "the fairy," and so, when Rosy told him that Margery

was lonely, and wanted him to go in to see her, he consented readily.

All his life long Edward had been his own master. His parents had died when he was a baby, and the only real friend he had ever known was Mrs. Conroy, or "Mother Conroy," as she was called by half the children in the neighbourhood. She had taken compassion on the lonely orphan, and had given him many a supper when he would otherwise have gone hungry to bed; and now that he had grown large enough to earn his own bread, the boy still looked to her as his one friend in the broad world.

He was a rough, burly fellow, used to all kinds of hardships, and fully able to take care of himself under any circumstances. His hands were blackened with his coarse work, and his face bronzed by exposure to the weather; but there was a pleasant twinkle in his keen grey eyes, and when he smiled, his whole face seemed to brighten, as if a sunbeam had flitted across it.

Margery had liked to meet him as he went out, with his foot-block swung over his shoulder, to his day's work, and she always had a smile and a pleasant word for him; and when Miss Raymond had suggested to her the idea of trying to do some good to those around her, almost her first thought had been of Edward. She had often seen him playing marbles on the Sabbath, or going off on excursions with the other boys, and she knew that he had no one to teach him the lessons of love and holiness which she had taken so joyfully into her own heart.

It was quite dark before she heard his heavy step in the entry. She had been alone, waiting for some time, having asked her grandfather to go up and sit with Mrs. Conroy, while she tried her little arts of persuasion with the boy; thinking, with her womanly tact, that he would be less likely to resist her if they were alone together.

"I'm so glad to see you, Ned!" she said, when he came. "You didn't mind my asking you to sit with me a while,—did you?"

"No," said the boy, "not if you was wantin' me. I thought it queer for you to want a great fellow like me hangin' round; but if you're pleased, I am."

He felt rather awkward in his new position, and sat, twirling his old torn hat in his fingers, studying the floor very closely. Margery saw his discomfort, and set herself to the task of placing him at his ease.

"Wasn't it you that told the policeman where I lived the day I was hurt?" she asked him.

"Yes; I showed him up here."

"It was very kind of you. I hope you did not lose any money by taking your time?"

"Oh, no, I guess not. They mostly gets their boots shined in the mornin' early. I get more jobs in the mornin' afore ten o'clock than all the day after. To-day's been a pretty good haul."

"How much did you make?"

"A dollar twenty afore half-past nine."

"Oh, what a lot!" exclaimed Margie.

"Yes; I hit on a good spot this mornin'. Seems all the gents wanted to be shined. Twelve pair of boots at ten cents a pair aint a bad day's work. And then I got a few more afore noon. But trade aint always so gay, you know. Of a wet day, now, I don't make nothin'."

His shyness was wearing off already, and soon they were talking together like sister and brother.

"Ned," said Margery, after a while, "will you do me a favour?"

"I wouldn't go for to say no," said the boy; "but I'd like to hear fust what it might be."

"I want you to come in here again to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock."

"That aint no great of a favour. I aint no objections

to comin'; but what makes you so fixed as to the time o' day?"

"I'm going to have a Sunday-school, and I'd like to have you come to it."

"Phew!" Ned gave a long whistle. "Why, that's for small chaps, Margery!" said he. "I'm too big to play at Sunday-school."

"It won't be play at all," said Margery, earnestly. "It's going to be a real, truly school. Please, Ned, do come."

"Who's a comin'?" asked Ned. "Any big fellows?"

"No, I guess not. Only three girls and a little boy. But you needn't mind that. I want you very bad."

"Oh, I'll come in of an evenin' again, Margie. But I don't like that idee. I'd feel like an Injun sittin' here with you bits of girls, playin' at school."

"But, Ned, I tell you it is not play; it's real earnest. You know I'm so hurt I can't go to my school, and so I want to have one here. Don't say no, Ned. I'm so lonely here all the long day, and I want you so bad. Please say yes."

She laid her hand in his rough, hard palm, and looked entreatingly into his face.

"Just come this once," she said, for he had given her no answer. "If you don't like it you needn't come again."

His whole boy-nature revolted against it. Playing at Sunday-school with three or four children! And yet the pleading of those dark eyes stirred him powerfully. There was in the boy something of the chivalric spirit which leads a great heart, conscious of its own grand strength, to yield to the weak and helpless. She looked so small and so feeble lying there, and he felt the young, strong life bounding so joyously through his own veins.

"O Ned, I'd be so glad if you would only come."

And now two bright tears sprang into her eyes, and vanquished him.

"Why, you queer little thing!" said he; "I don't see what you want of me: but if you feel so mighty bad about it, I'll come."

"Thank you, Ned; I'm so glad. You're very good to me;" and the hand which lay in his clasped itself tightly around his big fingers. Edward had never felt such a touch since he was a baby. He had a dim remembrance of a hand that used to pet and fondle him, and a pair of soft eyes which looked lovingly into his own; but the recollection was vague and shadowy: he could recall no distinct feature of his mother's face; only now, as he sat beside Margery, that close clasp seemed to call up some old, faint remembrance.

"I guess I might as well be taking myself off now," he said at last, rising from his seat.

"And you won't forget to-morrow?" said Margery.

"No, I'll be along. Don't you be afeard," and the boy went out, thinking of the morrow with a mixed feeling of repugnance and pleasure.

"I'll be a fish out of water amongst them young ones," he said to himself.

And then the thought of that small clinging hand thrilled through him with a new sensation of delight.

"Aint she the queerest little thing?" he thought.

But he made up his mind, as he threw himself upon his bed of straw that night, that if the world were full of such "queer" people it would seem a brighter place than he had yet found it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

SHORTLY before three o'clock on the Sabbath afternoon three barefooted, thinly-clad little girls, sauntered slowly

and all He asks us to do is to love Him and to be good. Even if any boy or girl has been very bad indeed—if they have swore, or stealed, or lied—Jesus will love them just the same, if they will only be sorry and stop doing such things.”

“But look here, Margery,” said Ned, earnestly, “what’s a fellow to do? Suppose he is sorry he’s bad, and has a mind to try for something better, he can’t turn straight round and do all that you say the man wants him to.”

“Don’t say ‘man,’ Ned,” said Margery, very gravely.

“You said He was a man.”

“Yes, but He is God’s Son all the same. He is a man to love; but, Ned, He is God to obey.”

Her voice was very solemn. For the moment he did not answer, then he said, quietly,—

“But, Margery, I don’t seem to get hold of it. A fellow can’t leave off swearin’ and lyin’ and’ all sich just in a minute. Supposin’ he does promise to stop, and then does it again; what then?”

“If you made up your mind to love the dear Saviour and to be good, you wouldn’t do such things as you spoke of on purpose—would you, Ned?”

“No. That would be awful mean to do it o’ purpose. If I made a bargain, I’d try to stick to it; but a fellow might forget, you know.”

“I know it; and so does this dear Jesus, who was once a boy Himself, know it, Ned. He never asks us to do what we can’t do. You see, His being just like us makes Him know all about us; and He can tell just what we can do, and what we can’t. So, if you do forget and act wrong sometimes, He’ll forgive you again and again, if you are really trying to serve Him. Are you going to try, Ned?”

“I dunno!”

It was the only answer he could make. The story had thrilled to the very depths of his soul, quickening into new strength every innocent feeling, every good impulse, which

yet lived there : but such feelings and impulses were few and weak in a heart which for thirteen years had been learning lessons of vice and wickedness. He did not know whether he intended "to try" or not, but a new desire, a new hope had arisen in his darkened mind. He could not see his way through the fog which obscured his sight, yet his eye had caught a faint glimmer of light, which in time, by God's good help, might kindle into the full blaze of perfect day.

"I don't think I can talk any more to-day," said Margery, after a short silence. "I am very tired. Will you all come next Sunday?"

Her scholars gave a willing promise, and tripped out into the cold, wintry air, with hearts all warm and glowing.

"Wasn't that a beautiful meetin'?" said Maggie, when they reached the street.

"Yes," said Janie. "I won't never be afraid to go in first again, Dora."

"She talks lovely," said Maggie, her face unusually sobered. "I aint goin' to tell lies no more, 'cause Jesus don't want me to, and He's so good."

"Will you come next Sunday, Ned?" asked Margery, when the others had gone.

"Yes I will, sartin. Margery ——"

"Well, Ned?"

"This is all right true, aint it?"

"Just as true as true can be," said Margery, solemnly. "It's awfully true, Ned; for if we don't believe it we will be lost. But we won't ever be lost if we trust in Jesus," she went on, after a pause. "He'll surely save us. O Ned, He is so, so precious!"

The boy wanted something precious—something to love, to trust, to lean upon; and at this moment his lonely heart yearned toward this Saviour, this friend of the friendless. But he did not tell this to his young teacher. He promised that he would come back, and left her to go out

into the terrible life of danger and temptation which had hitherto been his only school.

All seemed to work together for the blighting of that tender little seed of faith and love which had been sown in his heart this Sabbath afternoon. Would it be choked by evil passions? Or would the gentle dews of God's grace distil upon it, and the sunlight of His love fall in upon it, until the springing plant lifted its head and spread its tiny leaves in the soft, sweet light, growing slowly into a strong and noble tree, which should bring forth much fruit?

CHAPTER IX.

A HOME MISSIONARY.

THAT evening John Hardy came in to see Margery, and found her looking very pale.

"What ails you to-night?" he said. "Do you feel worse?"

"No. I'm tired; that's all."

"I think she is doing too much for her strength," said her grandfather. "She has started a sort of Sunday-school here, and she is the teacher. I'm afraid it's more than she ought to do."

"I should think so, too. You had better not make a work of play, Margery."

"What does make you all call it play?" said she, in a very grieved tone. "It is not play; I'm going to be a missionary."

John Hardy smiled. "I thought a missionary was a man who went across the seas to teach the heathen?"

"So it is. But Miss Raymond says that I can be a home missionary. I saw a home missionary once. He came to our Sunday-school monthly concert. He wasn't

lame like me ; but I suppose he was sick or something, so he couldn't go out much and had to let his heathens come to his own home."

"From across the seas?"

"No. Miss Raymond says there's plenty of heathens in New York. Anybody who don't know anything about God and Jesus Christ is a heathen."

He made no answer to that, but after a time he said, "You look so tired, I wonder if you would lie more easy in my arms. Would you like to try?"

"Yes, very much," said Margery. "Sometimes Mrs. Conroy raises me up for a while; but grandfather's hands tremble so he can't carry me."

He wrapped the coverlid closely about her, turning it back under the poor, motionless feet, which used to dance so lightly, for the room was damp and chilly. Then he lifted her in his arms, making a comfortable cradle for her.

"How nice this is!" she said, as he walked up and down the floor. "Mr. Hardy, do you love little girls?"

"I've learned to love this one very quickly," he answered, smiling down at her. "Just think, Margery; last Sunday night I did not know that there was such a child as Margery Bray."

"But Monday morning you did—didn't you? Is grandfather asleep, Mr. Hardy?"

"Let us see."

He crossed the room to where the old man sat, with his hands folded on his knees, and his head dropped upon his breast.

"Yes, he has fallen asleep," he said softly.

"Then I'd like to tell you something. Please take me to the window."

He carried her to the window, from which, looking straight upward, they could see, far beyond the tall roofs of the front houses, a line of blue sky dotted now with twinkling stars.

"Mr. Hardy——"

"Well, Margery?"

"That is where I'm going," and she pointed upward. "Home to my mother and father, and the dear Saviour."

"Oh, no, little one, that is foolish fear. You feel sick and weak, I know; but you are not in any danger of dying yet awhile. You mustn't get frightened."

"I'm not frightened," said the child. "Why should I be frightened to go to my dear Jesus? Mr. Hardy, you don't know Jesus, do you?"

"No, Margery, not as you do?"

"How do you mean, not as I do?"

"I believe that there is a God; but He is not lovely in my eyes."

"Oh, Mr. Hardy! don't speak so!"

"Why not, Margery?"

"Because He is so dear and good. I can't bear to hear you say that."

"I don't know," said John Hardy, almost angrily, "how you can think that He is dear and good, as you say, when you know that He has brought all this trouble on you and this helpless old man."

This child had obtained a firm foothold in the young man's love. Attracted toward her from the first by her pretty face and gentle manners—seeing her almost every day, she had crept into his heart in a way that astonished even himself; and he revolted against the fate which had overtaken her, as if she had been one of his own.

"He knows best," said Margery, softly. "It is His will."

"Yes, that is what you are always saying, and what all the preachers say; but how it can be best I can't see. Here are you and your grandfather, pushed down, down into the very depths of poverty—sick, helpless, and almost friendless—while thousands of wicked sinners are rolling in riches and enjoying every blessing. Is that what you call love?"

He forgot in his excitement that he was talking to a child; but she answered him.

"It does seem strange, but there is a good reason somewhere. Miss Raymond says perhaps I can do something for God lying here, that I couldn't have done if I had been well and strong. I've made a great prayer to God, Mr. Hardy."

"For what, Margery?"

"That He would let you love Him. If He hears me, and I know He will, won't that be a large pay for being lame?"

He was so touched by this proof of her affection for him, that, for the moment, he could not answer.

"I know He will let you see how precious He is," she went on. "Perhaps not while I am here, but when I am with Him in heaven, He will show you that His will is always good."

"Don't talk about dying, Margery. I hate to think of death. What would your grandfather do without you?"

"That is the only thing which makes me frightened," said she, a little tremulously. "But God can take care of him."

"It can't be," said John Hardy, "that this courage of yours will last. You will not feel so when you know that you are dying. Why, child, the boldest tremble at the thought of death!"

"Do they?" said Margery, simply. "Then they aint so tired as me."

"But don't you dread being shut down into the dark grave?"

"Yes," she said, with a slight shudder; "I don't like to think of that very much. But, oh, Mr. Hardy, if you loved Jesus, you'd think so much of being with Him that you'd almost forget that. Don't you think, if Jesus loves us so much, that He makes us forget that lonely time under

the ground, just by showing us how sweet it will be to see Him, that He must be very good?"

He did not reply to her question. He only said, "Poor little Margery!"

"I don't see why you call me 'poor,'" said Margery; "only I know, by the way you say it, that you're sorry for me: but, Mr. Hardy, I think I'm gladder than you."

"So you are; and so you will be, if your faith does not fail you at the end."

"It won't fail me at the end," she said, confidently. "Don't you know Jesus says, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself?' Do you think, when He comes for me I shall be afraid to go with Him?"

He could not understand her. He was a man who must have proof and testimony for all in which he believed; she was a little child, who sat humbly at Jesus' feet and learned of Him; and so it was that the little child found rest and peace, while the man struggled on, weary of his doubts and fears, yet refusing to cast them aside until he should *understand* God.

CHAPTER X.

ALMOST HOME.

WEEK after week rolled on, and Margery became weaker and weaker. Every day she seemed to look more fairy-like as her slender figure grew even more slight, and the large brown eyes sank deeper in the pale face.

Miss Raymond did all that could be done; but beef-tea, wines, and jellies, although they might give a temporary increase of strength, failed to benefit her permanently. Thinking that her own physician might think of something

which would help the child, Miss Raymond brought him to see her; but he shook his head sorrowfully.

"She is completely broken down," he said. "Her constitution never has been strong, and it is worn out."

A dark frown gathered on John Hardy's face when Peter Bray repeated to him the doctor's words, as he came in—which he did every evening now—to see his favourite.

"Worn out at nine years old!" he said, bitterly. "It is hard. I don't care what you say about contentment and submission to God's will. It is very, very hard!"

"You will not always think so, Mr. Hardy," said Margery.

"Why not, Margie?" His voice softened when he spoke to her.

"Because you will see how it is by-and-by. God will show you. Would you think it hard if he took poor, old, tired grandfather home, when he wants to go so much?"

"No, I suppose it would be best for him."

"But if I had never had that fall, Mr. Hardy, and God had taken grandfather away above the stars, where he will never be tired any more, what would have become of me? I'd have been left here all alone. I would not have known you, and Mrs. Conroy is too poor to help me, so I would have been left a miserable little beggar. Oh, you mustn't say God is hard! He's fixed it all just right. He's going to take me home first; and there I'll stand beside the gates till grandfather comes,—it won't be long, and we'll walk together in that beautiful country. Grandfather says this is a weary land; but I don't think it is, with him and you and the Conroys in it; it seems a very nice land to me: only the other land is the best, because that has our dear Saviour in it. Oh, it will be so beautiful to see Him! And dear father and mother, too!"

He did not answer, but sat, with his head leaning on his hand, thinking. What was it that made this child jubi-

lant at the thought of that death which made him, strong man as he was, quail and shrink? It was not that she was tired of life. She had been very poor; but she had been tenderly loved and cared for, and the joyousness of her disposition had made life very bright for her. What was this something which could bear her up in the hour of her weakness, which had taken away her anxious fears for her grandfather, which had filled her with such a sweet, patient trust?

She would have told him that it was "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;" but he would not believe that, and so he sat there chafing angrily at the thought that now, at nine years old, she lay dying, worn out with the anxiety and toil which had rested on her young shoulders. He did not reflect that her work was done, and now her reward was waiting for her. He saw only that an innocent child had been crushed by the weight which had been laid upon her. She, looking farther, by the aid of that keen sight which faith gives us, saw the love which had guided her, giving her to the desolate old man as his help and comfort, and then, her work finished, taking her away from the loveless life she must have led without him up to the blessedness of heaven.

For some weeks Margery kept up her little Sunday-school in spite of her growing weakness; but one Sabbath evening, after the children had left her, she fainted from exhaustion, and the doctor forbade her to try to teach them again. So, when they came trooping in on the next Sabbath, she only said a few words to each one, bidding them good-by.

"I'm going away," she said, gently, "up to heaven, to that dear Jesus we used to talk so much about; and I shall wait for you there. Will you all come?"

They told her softly that they would try, and were leaving the room, when Maggie Riley turned back to say, eagerly, but in a choked voice,—

"Margery, I won't tell lies no more. When I swept the crossings I used to say,—'Please, sir, give me a penny; my mother is sick,' when she wasn't sick a bit; but I won't never say it again."

And Margery's eyes grew bright as she kissed her, and told her to ask the Saviour to help her to be His child.

And then Edward came. The children had told him the sad news, and he had hesitated to enter the room; but he had a longing to see her once more, so he ventured in.

The hand which stole into his to-day was so small and thin that it seemed lost in his great, rough palm.

"Ned, have you tried to be Jesus' boy?"

"Not much, Margie," he said, candidly. "It's awful hard to be anythin' but bad."

"I know it is; but you must try, Ned. I shall watch you from the sky, and if God lets His angels help the people down here, I'll ask Him to let me help you,—shall I?"

He would have said yes, if he could. As it was, he wrung the tiny hand which lay in his, and went quickly out of the room.

The home missionary's work had not been in vain.

CHAPTER XI.

REST AND JOY.

It was a soft, warm day in April. A heavy shower had washed the earth, cleansing it from all soil and dust; and now the sun had broken forth, shining down radiantly from the blue heavens, as if he were trying to show how fair this beautiful earth of ours can be.

John Hardy walked slowly up the street that morning, toward the home of the child who had grown so dear to him. He was fond of children; but never before had of

crept so closely into his heart, and he was very sad as he thought how probable it was that he should make his last visit to her to-day.

He had spent the past evening in that basement; and, while he was there, Peter Bray had come in, looking more worn and weary than ever, and, in answer to his sympathizing words, had said,—

“ Ay, ay; it is too hard work for a man of fourscore: but I shall never take that walk again. Mr. Brooks paid me off to-night. He says I'm not fit for duty any longer.”

And when the young man had protested indignantly against his being thrown aside, Peter had answered,—

“ It was all right, John. I was not able to do my work. And he dealt well with me. It is only Tuesday, yet he has paid me the full week's wages. I shall do nicely.”

And then he sat down in his rocking-chair beside Margery, and, folding his hands on his knees, remained there, silent; only looking up, from time to time, to smile lovingly at his grandchild when she spoke to him, or stroked his bent head caressingly.

The policeman was off duty for the whole day, and he had promised to spend it with Margery; for the child, looking smilingly into the grave face of the man whom she clung to and leaned upon, even more than she was conscious of, had said,—

“ Come early to-morrow; I don't think I'll be here in the evening.”

As he entered the room, about nine o'clock in the morning, he saw the doctor leaning over the bed. The next moment he had lifted his head and spoken a few whispered words to the old man, who sat just where Hardy had left him the night before.

But Peter Bray took no notice of the physician. He seemed to see and to hear no one save his dying grand-

child. His eyes rested constantly on her face, and when she spoke he would answer her; but no one else could gain his attention.

"Let me speak to you," said the doctor. "He does not seem to understand."

John Hardy followed him to the door.

"The child is dying; she cannot live more than three or four hours. Shall I tell her, or will you?"

"I will tell her," said Hardy; and the physician went out.

Margery's eyes met his, as he turned to go back to the bed. He knelt down beside her, bringing his face on a line with hers.

"Margery——"

"I know what you are going to say," she said, lifting her hand to wipe away a tear which was rolling slowly down the young man's face. "I am going home very soon."

"And you are not afraid, darling?"

"Afraid of what? Of going to Jesus? Oh, no!"

The blue-veined eyelids sank slowly upon her cheek, and she lay in a sort of doze,—only her clasping fingers, holding his, telling that she had not yet answered the Master's call.

And John Hardy sat upon the edge of the bed, and watched her. This was the time that he had waited for,—the hour in which he had supposed that her childish faith would give place to dread and terror. He had thought that she would shrink and tremble when she saw the dark river of death flowing close at her feet, and knew that she must step down into it alone; but the little feet were dipping into the first waters of the on-coming tide, and she did not falter. She could leave this bright world, which, even from that miserable basement, looked gay and joyous on this sweet spring morning, without one thought of fear or reluctance.

He knew in his inmost soul that only the love of God Himself could so uphold that weak, helpless child. All his doubts and unbelief were swept away. He could see now how, through all her short life, God's hand had guided her, fitting her for this very hour,—this hour which had shown him that the God whom he had looked upon as a hard Taskmaster was, in truth, a tender, loving Father; and he bowed his head upon his hands, saying,—“ Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

For more than an hour he sat there, looking back over his own life, and seeing, now that his eyes were opened, how he, too, had been led and controlled by that same love in which Margery trusted.

As he watched her quiet, peaceful face, he longed to tell her what she had done,—how, by her unwavering, holy faith, she had led him home from all his wanderings. And then he thought perhaps she would never rouse from this stupor, would never have the joy of knowing that, at the very close of her young life, God had permitted her to lead an erring soul to the Saviour whom she loved.

He bent over her and whispered, softly,—

“ Margery.”

“ Yes.”

The long lashes did not stir, and her voice seemed to come from far, far away.

“ Do you understand what I say?”

“ Yes.”

“ I have something to tell you.”

The brown eyes flashed wide open, and fixed themselves on his face, with an eager, questioning look.

“ I see it all, Margery,—all the love and mercy which have guided your life and mine. My little child, through God's good grace, you have brought me to see the precious love of Christ. I, too, can say, ‘ Thy will be done,’ now.”

She tried to clasp her hands; but she was too weak.

He saw the effort, and, folding them together for her, laid them so upon her breast.

"Now tell Him how glad we are," she said.

And, kneeling upon the hard boards, John Hardy told the Master, whose service he had so long refused, how "glad" he was to give his life to Him now.

As he rose from his knees, he saw that Margery's eyes were resting on her grandfather. His glance met hers as it turned from the old man. The trouble which had shaded her brow for an instant passed away, as she said, gently,—

"God will take care of him."

And then she sank again into the quiet state from which his words had roused her.

All at once she stirred, and seemed to try to raise herself.

"What is it, Margery?" he said, bending closer.

"Lift me up. The gates are open. He is coming! Hush, hush! don't you hear the music of His feet?"

The tinkling feet seemed to draw nearer, nearer, until they came and stood beside the lowly bed.

She stretched out her eager, trembling hands.

"Dear Lord Jesus, take your little Margery," she said.

And He took her.

John Hardy laid the fair head down upon the pillow, and, leaning over the old man, spoke his name. But he did not answer, and so he stole softly away, leaving him alone with the dead child.

After a time he went back into the room. Peter Bray had risen from his chair, and was kneeling beside the bed; his worn, furrowed cheek lying close beside that of the child. John laid his hand upon his shoulder, speaking tenderly to him. Then he bent his head, and looked searchingly into his face.

Margery's prayer had been answered. God had taken care of him.

THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

"Give us this day our daily Bread."

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THE CROSSING-SWEEPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CROSSING.

It was a cold, bleak afternoon in December, and the wind swept around the corner of the street, with a cutting keenness which made its way through warm cloaks and heavy mufflers without any difficulty, and crept inside the rags of those who had neither cloaks nor mufflers, tossing them aside disdainfully, and piercing through them with a sharp chill, which reached the very hearts of the shrinking figures within. There had been a heavy fall of snow, followed by a rain, which had made the streets almost impassable, and the few persons who had ventured out in the cold and wet were hurrying homeward as fast as their business would allow.

On a crossing, in the lower part of Broadway, there was a girl holding in her hand the stump of an old broom, with which she had been sweeping the melted snow from the pathway. It was not a very safe position for her, with carriages, omnibuses, and waggons confusedly mixed together, rolling up and down the street so rapidly that at times it seemed as if the child could not possibly avoid injury. But she understood perfectly how to extricate herself from the difficulties which surrounded her. Dodging

between the vehicles, now almost underneath the horses' feet, now brushed by the wheels of an omnibus, now all but struck down by the shaft of a waggon, she still plied her broom, springing first to one side and then to the other, and always escaping unhurt.

She was very thin and sharp-featured, but there was a merry twinkle in her eyes which said plainly that cold and hunger had not yet totally quenched her love of fun. She was about twelve years old, though it would have puzzled one at the first glance to tell her age. A few moments ago, when with true, unerring aim, she threw a snowball at a boy who had spoken saucily to her while passing over her crossing, you would have said that the pleasant face sparkling with laughter could not have seen more than ten years of life: but if you had looked at it a little later, bending over a child much younger than herself, as she pinned the ragged shawl which covered the little one's head more closely under the pinched chin, with a careful motherly air, you would have supposed that she was at least fourteen years of age; there was such a worn, anxious expression on her face.

And it was no wonder that Maggie Riley's brow often bore that worried look, for the days were many in which the care of the whole family of five children and an invalid mother rested upon her; and the nights in which she lay awake contriving how to make half a loaf answer for the breakfast, in order that she might keep a few pennies to buy liniment for her mother's rheumatism, were very, very frequent. And yet, in spite of all this, there was a something within her which prevented this careworn air from becoming her habitual expression, and made her eyes bright, and her laugh gay and childlike, notwithstanding her many perplexities with regard to ways and means. Shut within the doors of Maggie Riley's heart, caged there (for she never meant to let them fly away), were two bright birds, named Hope and Love, whose music chased

away the cloud of care from her brow almost as soon as it settled there. Perhaps I should not say *bright* birds, for the sweetest songsters are often those of the darkest plumage, and the notes of these were so full and rich that their coats may have been of sober brown. They began again to sing their joyous little song in her heart, to drive away the troubled feeling that rushed over it now; for the child, whose shawl she had just arranged, had cowered down into a door-way, and began to whimper.

"There, Amy, don't you cry," said Maggie, from her post on the crossing; "we'll go home by-and-by. We must get a few more pennies first. Here comes a man," she continued, as a gentleman, pausing for an instant at the upper crossing, came down to pass over that on which she stood; "he'll give us one, I guess . . . A penny, please, sir," and a hand was held out before the gentleman as he reached the further side.

"Move on," he said, putting her aside. "These sweepers are a perfect torment," he added, as if to himself.

"Then why did you come down to my crossing?" retorted Maggie. "You might have gone on the upper walk if you like to go in over your boots."

He muttered some reply, of which Maggie caught only the two words, "impertinent" and "police."

"I am not saucy," she replied angrily. "Girls aint got no call to be saucy to gentlemen; but you aint got no call to say I'm a torment neither. If you don't want to pay your penny you needn't, but it aint right to come down here a purpose to use my crossing because it's better than the other, and then call me names for nothin'."

The man had paused in amazement to listen to this outburst, and looking down upon her as she stood leaning upon her old broom, her indignation flashing from her eyes, and burning on her cheek, he said in an amused tone,—

"You take it hard, I think."

"And I think I might take it hard," said Maggie. "Trying to fright me with the police, too! I can tell you, Mister, the police around here all knows me; and you wouldn't get one of them to touch me, 'cause they all knows I sweep fair and never throw any dirty water over the walk, but just keeps it as clear as I can. And I've got lots of gentlemen that always comes to my crossing every mornin' reg'lar, and always has their pennies, and a kind good-mornin' for me. They all knows I work fair. The police, indeed!" and she tossed her head scornfully.

Poor Maggie! It was not the first time that day that she had been called hard names; and standing ankle-deep in the freezing water, with the bitter wind cutting through her tattered clothes, and her numb fingers scarcely able to hold the old broom, it was no great wonder that her temper gave way under this new assault. Perhaps the gentleman thought that there was some excuse for her, for the lines of his hard face softened, and he smiled as he said,—

"You certainly know how to stand up for your rights."

"And it takes one to know how to stand up for their rights," returned Maggie, rather more peaceably, "when one has five children to take care of, and——"

But here one of the five children from her corner in the doorway sobbed out,—

"O Maggie, it's so bitter, bitter cold; please do take Amy home."

In a moment the gentleman stood alone, and his fierce little antagonist was kneeling on the cold stone, beside the small figure crouching in the corner.

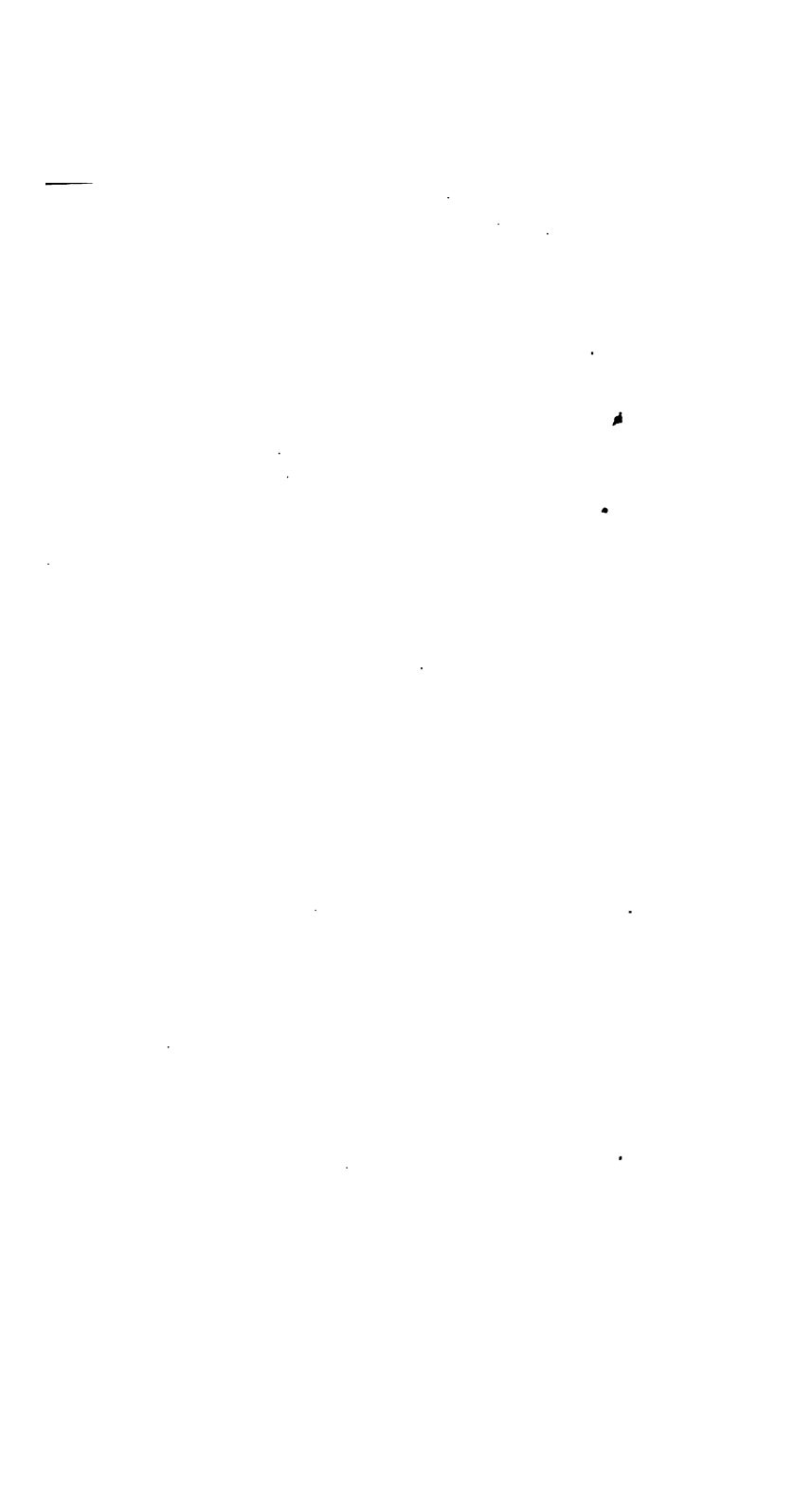
He watched her curiously, as, taking the child's numb fingers in her own, she put them to her mouth and blew upon them with her warm breath, and then, as the little one still sobbed and cried, opened her shawl and laid them upon her own bare neck, and covered them again with the shawl, talking the while playfully and cheerily.

"Come, come, Amy, you must be a good girl. We'll



“‘Here, child, take this, and don’t wait for any more pennies.’”—P. 175.





get more pennies soon, and then I'll take you in my arms and carry you home, and you shall keep your poor cold hands under my shawl like this, and they'll be fine and warm. Won't you be gay, riding up Broadway in your carriage like a fine lady! I'll be the carriage, and you'll be the lady, and the horses shall trot so fast that we'll be home in no time."

"Here, child, take this, and don't wait for any more pennies. Carry the little girl home,—she will freeze to death there."

Maggie glanced up, silent with surprise. The voice was so changed that she could scarcely believe the evidence of her own sight when she saw standing beside her the gentleman whose impatient words she had so strongly resented. The hand which was stretched out toward her held a twenty-five cent piece, at which she gazed with a curious blending of earnest longing and bewildered surprise.

"Not for us?" she said at last: "you don't mean all that for us?"

"Yes, yes; take it and go home. You ought not to bring that baby out on such a day."

"But she won't bide at home without me," said Maggie; "and if she would, mother's too sick to take care of them all. O Mister——" and the eyes which a few moments before had flashed defiance at him, were now lifted to his face swimming in tears,—"it's so good of you to give us this. It'll buy some medicine for mother, and she wants it so very bad. I'm right sorry I was so cross to you."

"What is the matter with your mother?" asked the gentleman, taking no notice of the apology.

"I don't know, sir, unless it's the rheumatism; but she's dreadful sick. She just lies on the bed all day, and sometimes the tears run down her face with the bitter pain; and whenever she moves, or anything shakes her, she screams out. But this'll buy some medicine for her, and

she'll be better soon, I guess," she added, cheerfully. "Come, Amy, now we'll go. This good gentleman has given us a whole lot of money. Can't you thank him?"

Amy, whose sobs had ceased as her aching fingers grew less painful in their warm nest, looked up with a smile.

"Mammy 'll be glad," she said, in a little musical voice. "Mammy cried all the night, but she'll laugh now. Good man! nice good man! Amy loves him a heartfull!"

She clasped her arms about her sister's neck, as Maggie lifted her from the stone, and with another penitent burst of gratitude the girl turned away with her burden. But when, a moment after, the gentleman paused in his rapid walk to glance back at them, he saw that they had stopped and were looking after him. As the children caught his eye, Amy drew one of her chilled hands from its resting-place on Maggie's neck, and threw a kiss to him. He nodded, and turning, went on his way, while the little girls went theirs.

CHAPTER II.

THE DARK BASEMENT.

ON and on went the little feet, never pausing to rest, although the weight of the child, grown drowsy with the cold, became each moment heavier, until at last the tired head sank on Maggie's shoulder, and Amy fell asleep. It was a long walk, and the slippery pavement, covered with half-melted ice, made it even more fatiguing than usual.

Reaching the upper part of Broadway, Maggie turned out of the wide thoroughfare, passed through one or two narrow streets, and finally paused before a small wooden house, the front room of which was a miniature store. She looked in at the window, uninviting enough to most eyes, but to her view very rich and tempting. The most con-

spicuous object was a bag of buckwheat which occupied the centre of the window, and which, from its colour, a drabbish yellow, might be supposed to have stood for years as the sign-board of the establishment. Yet that bag was a mine of wealth in Maggie's eyes, and its possession the height of her ambition. She stood gazing at it now as it lay surrounded by small, sour-looking oranges, withered lemons, bottles of horse-radish, and little mounds of dried apples, with here and there a tallow candle supporting itself against the glass, wondering how far the twenty-five cents, pinned fast on her dress, would go toward buying it, trying with her very small arithmetical powers to calculate how many twenty-five cents it would require to make up two dollars,—the sum which the proprietor of the store asked for this precious bag.

Failing in the task, and remembering with a sigh that the twenty-five cents must go for liniment for her mother, she left the coveted treasure in its place, and, entering the house, passed through the entry, out by the back-door into the yard, and stopped at the head of a long flight of stone steps to clasp her arms more securely around Amy before attempting to descend. The precaution was very necessary, for the steep stairs were covered with ice from top to bottom, so that the slightest misstep would have precipitated them both upon the rough stones below. But the descent was accomplished safely, thanks to Maggie's practised foot, and passing through an entrance, the door of which stood leaning against the wall, destitute of latch or hinge, she carried the sleeping child into a low, dark room, or rather cellar, lighted by two little windows near the ceiling, through which no ray of sunlight ever pierced, but which seemed to serve only as an avenue, through which the wind and rain and snow might come at their pleasure.

'Is that you., Maggie dear?' said a feeble voice, from somewhere in the darkness.

"Yes, mother, this is me," said Maggie.

"And did you bring anything for the children to eat?"

"Not yet, but we'll have plenty. Amy was so sound asleep that I had to bring her down first, but I'll go right back and buy some bread. And, mother, you'll have some medicine, too. A man gave me twenty-five cents, and I had twenty before. I'll take out ten cents toward the rent, and then we'll have enough for bread and medicine, too. We're well off to-day."

"Never mind the medicine, Maggie. Buy some bread and leave the rest toward the rent; we're falling behind-hand, I'm afraid."

"No, mother, we're all right. I got a big boy to count it up for me, and he says if I put by ten cents every day that'll make the rent. He says there's thirty days in a month, and that thirty ten cents make three dollars; so there's the rent all safe."

"But, Maggie, you mightn't make enough to put by ten cents every day, and buy bread, too."

"Then we must do without the bread; but I guess it won't be so bad as that. You remember what I told you about that daily bread, don't you?"

"No," said the mother, in a dreary, hopeless tone.

"Don't you? Well, maybe the pain's drove it away. I'll tell you when I get back. The fire seems pretty low."

"Yes; and there's no more cinders, nor even a stick of wood."

"Then I'll run over to the gas-house and pick a basket of coke, after I've brought you something to eat. Good-by for a minute," and, drawing her thin shawl about her, she went out again into the cold.

She soon returned, bringing a loaf of bread, from which she cut a thick slice for each of the five hungry children, and then placing the small remainder of the loaf upon a high shelf, lest they should be tempted to infringe upon the next morning's breakfast, she took an old broken basket

down from a nail in the wall, and sallied forth for the third time.

When she returned it was quite dark, and as she stumbled into the room a chorus of childish voices began to beg for a light.

"Wait a minute," said Maggie, as she set her basket down on the floor. "I've got a candle, and I'll light it as soon as I can find a match. There's one here on the shelf, I know, for I left it last night. Oh, here it is!"

The flickering light of the tallow candle lit up a saddening scene. In one corner of the room lay a woman stretched on a straw bed, and covered with a ragged quilt. Beside the broken and now cold stove there sat a little girl of eight years old, holding in her lap a puny baby, while three other children crowded round the wretched apology for a fire, pressing their hands and even their faces to the scarcely warm iron.

"Now we'll have it warm," said Maggie. "I've got a beautiful basket of coke here. Move a little bit, Sammy, will I come there."

The boy moved readily enough, and, as the flames crept slowly up under Maggie's careful treatment, he began to dance about on his bare feet, singing gleefully,—

"Oh, we've got a fire! Oh, we've got a fire!"

As soon as it was fairly burning, Maggie dragged a mattress from the further corner of the room, and, putting it down close by the stove, bade the little ones lie down upon it. There was no laying aside of tiny garments, no creeping into snow-white night-dresses. As they were, in their ragged, soiled clothes, they threw themselves down, and Maggie covered them over with a worn-out comfortable. Then taking from the shelf, where she had placed it for safe-keeping, the bottle of liniment which she had insisted upon buying, she turned to her mother.

"Look what a beautiful bit of flannel I found in the

street, mother!" she said, taking it from the inside of her shawl as she spoke.

It was nothing more than an old rag, which she had picked from an ash-barrel; but it was flannel, and she knew how her mother would prize it.

"It was dreadful dirty and full of ashes when I got it; but I asked a man at the gas-house if he'd dry it for me if I washed it, and he said 'Yes.' So I washed it out, and now, you see, it looks first-rate. I'll put some liniment on it, and then I needn't touch you with my hands."

The gentle, sympathizing face bending over the sick woman, was strangely unlike that which had confronted the gentleman on the crossing. Maggie Riley fighting her way alone and unaided through a rough, unjust world, was a very different person from the Maggie Riley who knelt at the bedside of her suffering mother, touching her with such tender fingers, soothing her with such loving words and looks.

"Now I'll put out the candle, and lie down beside you," she said, when she had made her as comfortable as possible; "and we'll talk a bit. Maybe that will make you forget the pain. I'll lie down so softly that I won't shake you at all. There's cover enough here, so you needn't stir. There—now we're nice; and I didn't hurt you,—did I?"

"No, bless you, child! you never do that."

"I was to tell you about the daily bread, mother. Don't you remember those words that Margery Bray told me to say every night and morning?"

"Margery Bray?" repeated the mother, thoughtfully. Long and incessant pain had warped all her faculties, and her memory was so weak that she seldom remembered more than that which passed around her in her daily life.

"Yes. Margery was the little girl who went to Jesus' home last winter. Don't you remember how I went to her

house while she was sick? She had a little Sunday-school, and she taught us about Jesus Christ."

"Yes, yes, I believe I do recollect," said the woman. "But what about those words?"

"Well, those was some words that Jesus Christ taught the men who loved Him to say to God. I can say them all; but I don't rightly know what they all mean. First, there's 'Our Father which art in heaven.' That means that God is like a father to us, and we must love Him like we loved father when he was alive. Then there's 'Hallowed be Thy name,' and 'Thy kingdom come,' and, 'Thy will be done.' I don't know what those mean exactly; but then comes one thing that seems to be like as if Jesus Christ just made it for us. It's this,—'Give us this day our daily bread.' That means that we want bread every day, and I'm sure that's true enough; for we do want it dreadful bad when we can't get it. And I think, mother, that maybe it means house and fire, too. And Margery said that, if we asked Jesus for it, and did all we could ourselves to get it, He'd give it to us, because He loves us so much that He wants us to have all we need. So I ask Him every night and morning, and I work as hard as I can, and you know, mother, it almost always comes;—don't it?"

"Yes, most days it does, Maggie; but it's sore labour for you to get it."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Maggie, cheerfully; "only when people is so ugly as that man was at first. But then I oughtn't to be mad; because there's another part of that which asks Jesus to forgive us our sins like we forgive the people that are mean to us; and I'm sorry now that I was so cross. And that man turned out a good man, after all; for it was him as gave me the money for the liniment. I'll try not to be cross the next time; for I do want to be good, like Margery was. Only, mother, Margery didn't sweep a crossing. I wonder if

people that don't sweep crossings find it such hard work to be good? I wish I could always feel as I do now; but I do think that standing in that dreadful cold water, and feeling so tired and so hungry, makes a difference. But now you're tired, and we'll try to go to sleep," said Maggie, noticing that her mother only answered by a sigh. "I'll say 'Our Father,' and then we won't talk any more."

The prayer was said, and five minutes after the child was fast asleep.

CHAPTER III.

A HARD DAY.

Poor Maggie had begun her Christian life under very adverse circumstances. A year before a seed had been dropped into her heart, which had taken deep root there; but it had much to struggle with in that hitherto barren soil. That heart had always been a soft spot where her mother and little brothers and sisters were concerned; but early hardship and the necessity of making her way alone through the world had made her rough and sharp toward every one outside that wretched room which she called her home, and watchful and suspicious of all with whom she had to deal. There was little that was sweet or attractive in the pinched, thin-featured face, as she stood upon her crossing, broom in hand, or begged from door to door, as she was sometimes forced to do; and there was no musical note in the high-pitched voice in which she boldly asserted her rights when she thought herself unjustly used. It was only when she spoke to little Amy, who was always at her side, or when she reached her home, that the sharp eyes lost that disagreeable, suspicious look

and softened into tenderness, and the loud voice sank into a soothing, gentle whisper. For Maggie had not yet learned to follow in the footsteps of Him who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." She had heard the touching story of His life and death, and it had won her love for Him who had suffered and died that she might live; and had given a higher motive for the discharge of all those duties which her affectionate heart had already willingly undertaken for those whom she loved. But her lessons had been very few and very simple, and she applied them only at home. No one who met her outside of that basement would have suspected that she was the light and the joy of that dark room.

And yet there was One above who watched her closely, and who saw in that little ragged figure, so often yielding to temptation, so often stained with sin, one of His own followers. He knew that she was quick in temper, impatient in speech, and faulty in many, many ways; but He knew also that with what little light she had she tried to follow Him; that, having learned that a lie was hateful in His sight, no temptation could wring a falsehood from her lips; that, having been taught that it was a sin to steal, she would have starved rather than have laid a finger on anything which belonged to another; and that, having been told that He would answer her prayers, she asked Him each morning for daily bread, believing she should receive it, as firmly as she believed in the shining of the sun and stars. Never did the famished lips deny themselves their last morsel of bread to give it to a hungry little sister, never did the cold hands busy themselves in some task for the helpless mother, never did the weary limbs refuse themselves rest for another's service, but those eyes, watching from above, noted the unselfish act; and a record was written in letters of gold in the book of His remembrance, who had Himself known hunger and cold and weariness; and an angel was sent from His glorious

had detained her so long that she lost some of her earliest customers; and some of those whom she counted upon most surely did not pass that way this morning. "I have none," seemed to be the general answer to her appeal; "A penny, please, sir:" and some did not even answer, but shook their heads impatiently, or pushed her aside by way of reply. It was the day before Christmas, and the street was thronged with people, but all seemed too busy to help her, save one here and there who gave her a penny; and toward evening a gentleman, touched by her troubled face, put a five-cent piece in her hand. She had already gathered together five cents, so her rent was safe; but what should she do for bread?

She no longer stood up to her ankles in water, as she had done the previous day, for the air, which had been growing keener and keener, had become bitterly cold, and the crossing was now covered with ice. The passers-by hurried on, taking no notice of the child who stood holding out her hand in mute appeal, too intent upon reaching their pleasant homes to think of anything else; and, as Maggie saw the darkness coming on so fast, and the crowd thinning more and more, she began to despair. That little bird called Hope, which had sung so blithely in her heart when she rose in the morning, had been chilled by the intense cold, and almost frightened away by rebuffs and sharp words; but the other bird, the one named Love, still sang its song as sweetly as ever, and, encouraged by it, even Hope gave a little chirp once in a while, so that Maggie's courage did not utterly fail. Just as the great clock of Trinity Church struck five, a lady came up the street and turned toward Maggie's crossing.

"Please, ma'am, do give me a penny," said the girl, in a pleading voice. "I haven't got one to buy bread for the children."

"That's a lie!" said a voice behind her. "I just saw her take a lot of money out of her pocket and count it."

The lady, who had opened her purse, paused, and looked, first at the boy who had spoken, and then at Maggie.

"Are you telling me a falsehood?" she asked gravely.

"No, ma'am, it's true; I said I hadn't any money for bread, and ——"

"And you have, for I saw it!" interrupted the boy.

"Hush!" cried Maggie, angrily: "that's for the rent. I've only got ten cents, ma'am, and that's for the rent."

"That's a very foolish story, little girl," said the lady.

"No one pays ten cents for rent. I am afraid that you are a very wicked girl," and the clasp of the pocket-book was fastened with a snap as the lady moved away.

The boy followed her, looking back to say, in a taunting voice, "You'd better not try that again, young woman."

Those might have been his last words, for the sharp, hard lump of ice, which Maggie seized, as he turned his back upon her, might easily, if it had struck his head, have stilled his voice for ever. But something stopped the angry hand. For a moment she stood with her hand upraised, and her whole face darkened with passion; then the arm fell slowly, the gleaming eyes filled with tears, and, with a deep sob she sat down upon the kerbstone, and hid her face in her hands.

It was not often that she gave way; that taunts, and hardships, and unkindness so far subdued her spirit as to wring sobs and tears from her; and even now, the tears were soon checked: not so soon, however, but that they brought some relief to the overburdened heart. A little pair of feet, walking unsteadily over the ice, approached her, a tiny pair of arms stole around her neck, a little face was pressed close to hers, and a sweet voice whispered, —

"Amy loves Maggie. Maggie mustn't cry when Amy loves her."

That voice roused both the birdies caged in Maggie's heart, and they burst forth, with such a gush of joyous

song, that she raised her drooping head at once, and, dashing off the tears, said,—

“I won’t cry again, Amy. Come, now we will go home. Are you too cold to walk a little way?” she asked, as she rose from her seat, feeling so worn-out that it seemed as if she could not bear the child’s weight.

“I can walk a whole heap,” said Amy, confidently, but she proved herself mistaken. The tottering limbs, chilled by the frost, lagged heavily, and their progress was so slow, that they felt the intense cold most bitterly.

“I’d better carry you,” said Maggie, after trying in vain to urge her on somewhat faster, and, lifting her in her arms, she sped on as rapidly as possible toward home.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

“THE windows is so pretty, Maggie—look!” said Amy, as they walked up Broadway, past the brilliantly-lighted windows, filled with all sorts of beautiful things.

Here was a collection of toys of all kinds; richly-dressed dolls, with fair curling hair; toy-cradles and waggons; gaily-painted dinner-sets; horses all saddled and bridled, and decked out in the brightest trappings. In another window were huge cakes surmounted by sugar castles and forts; dishes of most tempting candy, oranges, and rosy-cheeked apples. And in all the stores, and passing up and down the street, were merry children with bright eyes, and cheeks as red as those rosy apples, snugly wrapped in warm cloaks, with their hands tucked safely away into muffs, as secure from the biting cold as little dormice in their nests.

Maggie went on past all this beautiful world with which

she had nothing to do, pausing now and then to let Amy look at some gorgeously-decked Christmas-tree, or some window which surpassed its neighbour in splendour, until, at last, she reached her home.

"What made it all so nice to-night, Maggie?" asked Amy, as her sister placed her on her feet at the door.

"To-morrow is Christmas," said Maggie, "and people that has money always buys lots of things on Christmas; so the shopmen made their windows look so fine to coax them to come in and buy, I suppose."

As she spoke, a man who was passing turned to look at her. It was the gentleman with whom she had had the encounter on the day before. She did not notice him, however, but went into the house, and, after watching her out of sight, he walked on.

"Now, Amy, you wait here while I run into Mr. Hill's with his ten cents," said Maggie. "I'll be back in one minute."

She was moving toward the door as she spoke, but suddenly she stopped. She had heard a sound which made her grasp the money more tightly in her hand,—a wailing sound, as of the crying of little children. As plainly as if she had been looking into the desolate room she could see four little trembling creatures huddled around the stove, each face stained with tears and purple with cold; and as distinctly as if the words had been spoken to her could she hear the cry which she knew would greet her,—“Maggie, did you buy some bread?”

She stood, and listened, and thought. Should she take the money to that hard man, who had fire, and food, and all things else that he needed, when she and those whom she loved had nothing?

"It belongs to him," she said to herself, "and it would be stealing and telling a lie to take it for bread. And yet, and yet—oh, what shall I do?"

She sat down on the stairs to think, closing the back-

door, which had been standing open, to shut out that distracting noise of crying.

"He ought not to have it, the cruel man! But, then, I promised, and it would be wicked to tell a lie about it, even when it's to get bread. Margery said we must always do right whatever happened, and if we did, that Jesus would take care of the rest. But, then, maybe He let me get this ten cents to buy bread. No, He couldn't have done that, 'cause He knows everything, and He must have heard me promise to bring the first ten cents to Mr. Hill. I wonder what He means me to?"

She sat very still for a few moments, then she arose, and saying, half aloud, in a firm, resolute voice,—"He didn't mean me to tell a lie, any way," she walked quickly across the entry and went out.

"Mr. Hill," she said, entering the little store in whose window the coveted bag of buckwheat still reposed, "here's your ten cents," and she held it toward him.

Perhaps there was something in her face, which told of the conflict through which she had passed; perhaps he saw the longing look with which she watched the money, as he transferred it from her hand to the till; for he said, roughly enough, as if he were half angry with himself for pitying her, "Is this all you've got?"

"Yes, every cent, and we've nothing to eat," said Maggie, with a momentary hope that his hard heart would be moved.

"Well," he said, in an unwilling, grudging voice, "I mustn't take your last cent, I suppose. Here, you may take this, and I'll still call it ten cents," and he handed her a penny.

"If you please, Mr. Hill, I'll take a penny's worth of wood," said Maggie, "for we've no fire."

He went to a box in the corner, took from it two or three sticks of wood, and handing them to her threw the coin back into the till, and Maggie left him.

"We'll have some fire, anyway," said she, as she rejoined Amy. "And we must try to do without any bread for to-night. A penny's worth of bread wouldn't have been worth anything, and I'm afraid we'd freeze to death this cold night if we had no fire. And, Amy dear, you won't cry for bread, will you?" she said, coaxingly; feeling that, if Amy's tears were added to those of the rest, her own courage might give way.

"No, I won't cry," said Amy, who, having had a roll given her by a baker who had passed by in the morning, was less famished than the others. "I'll be a good girl."

There was no loud outcry among the little ones when Maggie told them that she had nothing for them; they were well used to hunger, and they were so delighted to see that she had brought some wood to rekindle the dead fire, that for the moment they were satisfied. But the quiet did not last long. One by one they began to cry afresh; and when at last Amy too gave way, and sobbed out, "Oh, Maggie, I will be good, but I'm so cold, and I do want some bread," poor Maggie was almost in despair, but she answered cheerily,—

"Well, Amy, we'll try not to mind. Maybe we'll get some bread somehow. Margery said that Jesus would give us everything we asked Him for if it was good for us, and I'm sure that bread must be; and I've been saying, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' all day long, and I guess He'll get it for us."

"But, Maggie, why does He let some folks have bread, and cakes, and candies, and all sorts of things, and us not have even bread?" asked Mary, the eldest of the little girls.

"I don't know, Mary. I only know what Margery told me; but Jesus never let us be so very bad off as this before, and I guess He'll help us soon. Now I'll put the bed down here, and you can all lie down close together, and I'll cover you up as warm as I can, for the fire won't

burn, and it's getting colder and colder. You must try to bear it as well as you can, and go to sleep, and to-morrow when you wake up I'll have a surprise for you."

She dragged the old straw bed close to the stove, and the children laid down upon it as they had done the previous night; but Maggie did not cover them over at once.

"Wait a minute," she said: "kneel upon the bed, and let's all say 'Our Father' together. Maybe Jesus will come sooner if we all say it."

Five little kneeling figures, five little upturned faces lifted toward that broken window, five feeble voices whispering the holy words. The more childish voices followed Maggie's, repeating the petitions after her, until she came to that which she best understood,—“Give us this day our daily bread.” There she paused to say reverently, “Let's say that twice, for we want it so very bad;” and again the prayer went up in pleading tones,—“Jesus, dear Jesus, please ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’”

Lying close together to gain what warmth they could from each other, the children tried to sleep. Maggie had covered them with everything that she could find to throw over them, and at last drowsiness overpowered them, and they forgot all their troubles.

No sooner was the room quiet, than Maggie stole out to prepare her surprise, the promise of which poor Mary had been too cold to heed. As she returned from Mr. Hill's store, she had noticed lying in the street a green bough broken from some Christmas-tree, and she determined at once that her children should have a little tree of their own. She found the bough lying where she had left it, and as she lifted it to carry it into the house a girl who was passing said,—

“Are you going to have a Christmas-tree?”

“Yes,” said Maggie; “but I've got nothing to put on it.”

"I'll give you a bit of candy," said the girl. "A lady my mother works for gave me these; see!" and stepping beneath the gas-light she opened a parcel which she carried in her hand, and showed Maggie some sticks of candy. She was a poor girl like herself, and Maggie looked at her wonderingly as she held out two of the longest pieces of candy, and said, "You may have these for your tree. Take them quick; it is too bitter cold to stand here."

"Oh, no! you're too kind," said Maggie, hesitating.

"No, I aint; poor folks must help each other. Here, take them," and pushing the candy into Maggie's hand she hurried away.

"Now, we'll have a real Christmas," said the child, as she tied her bough to the back of a broken chair with a bit of string. "See, mother, won't that look nice? and I'll break the candy into seven bits, and we'll each have one. See how pretty it is, all red and white! it'll look beautiful."

She could scarcely fasten the candy on the bough, her fingers were so benumbed; but at length each piece was tied on, and the tree was ready; and in all the great houses of the city there was not a Christmas-tree the preparation of which had afforded the giver more real pleasure than Maggie had felt in the arrangement of hers.

The baby woke crying as she finished her task, and, going to him, she found that the other children had drawn the scanty covering from him, and he was shivering with cold.

"He'll never keep warm there, Maggie," said the mother. "Take him in your arms, and come and lie down beside me."

"No, I'm not sleepy, mother; and there aint covers enough for us both. I'll keep warmer moving about. But what makes you put your hand to your head so? does it hurt you?"

"There's such a dreadful wind comes in at that broken pane. Is there nothing to stuff it up with? It seems as if my head would freeze."

"I'll look for a bit of rag," said Maggie, and going into an inner room, or closet, she opened an old trunk which stood there, in the hope of finding something wherewith to shut out the wind.

It was a fruitless search. Every rag had been taken from it already. The trunk was empty, save for a little book which Maggie took up and looked at lovingly.

"Jesus' book," she said softly, and opened it. She did not know how to read, but by the light of the candle which stood on the floor she could distinguish the larger letters from the smaller; and, tracing down page after page with her finger, she paused at length at a short word beginning with a long straight letter.

"That's it," she said, in the same low voice. "That's Jesus. I wonder where is the prayer."

She turned over the torn leaves one by one, but she did not know how to distinguish the words for which she looked, and turning back to the loose leaf on which she had found the treasure named, she lifted it from the book and laid it in her bosom.

"It'll keep me warm," she said. "It's like being very near to Jesus. Margery said I could be near to Him if I tried to be good; and I have tried, I'm sure I have."

"Maggie, dear, do you find anything? It's getting worse and worse here," said a feeble, quivering voice.

"Mother, I'm afraid——" she hesitated, stood for a moment thinking, and then hastily unfastening a skirt which she wore under her dress, took it in her hand, and went back into the room.

"I've found something, mother. There, don't that feel better?" she said, as she tucked the skirt into the broken window. "It don't blow on you now, does it?"

"No ; that is a deal better, and the room will be warmer, too."

"I'll take baby, mother, and keep him warm in my arms, while you get a little sleep."

"But you're so tired, child."

"No, I'd rather walk up and down. I think it'll make me not feel the cold so much. There, Willie," she whispered, folding the little fellow close to her breast ; "put your head right there and go to sleep. Jesus is there."

Jesus was there. Not only in those printed letters, but in that noble, unselfish heart, hidden away beneath rags and poverty.

Up and down the floor Maggie walked, and walked, and walked, until her aching limbs almost refused to move, — the cold growing every moment more and more intense. Her mother had sunk into an uneasy slumber, the baby had fallen asleep in her arms, and she was the only one awake in the room. For a long time, as at each turn in her walk she went toward the window, the weary face was lifted to the far-off sky, and the entreating voice reiterated the prayer so often repeated,—

"Dear Jesus, send us bread and fire, or we'll surely die."

But by-and-by the low voice ceased its pleading ; the tired limbs paused in that walk which had been growing slower and more feeble at every turn, and Maggie let herself sink gently down upon the floor. She was no longer cold. She wanted to rest, that was all. Her hunger, and the sharp, aching pain in her limbs, were quite forgotten ; and bending over the baby, she yielded, without the least effort at resistance, to the dreamy, languid feeling which was stealing over her.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN ANOTHER HOME.

MR. GRAHAM, the gentleman who had stood before the little shop, attracted by the sound of Maggie's voice, had hesitated for a moment, as if half inclined to follow her into the house, and then had walked away. He had not very far to go before he reached his own home. He crossed the Eighth Avenue, the Seventh, and the Sixth, and reaching a large, handsome house, went up the steps, and opened the door with a latch-key. The key had no sooner rattled in the lock than the sound of a child's voice, calling out glee-fully, "Here's father, mother," rang through the hall, and the father's stern face softened, and a pleasant smile broke over it, as, the next instant, on entering the house, a little girl sprang to his side, and threw her arms around his neck, while he bent over her, and kissed her first on one cheek and then on the other.

"You are very late, father," she said, as he threw off his overcoat. "Cook has been scolding about dinner; she says it will all be spoiled; and we wanted you to see our Christmas presents for mother; and we've got a lovely one for you, — only you mustn't see that till you see it on the tree to-morrow; and Bessie is to come down to dinner, because it's Christmas Eve; and William wants to know if he may bring up the soup."

"Soup, and Bessie, and cooks, and Christmas presents, all in a jumble, Alice," said Mr. Graham, laughing. "Tell William he may bring up the dinner in a few moments. I must have a little time to make myself ready."

Alice ran away to give the order, while her father went upstairs, to be met in the upper hall by another eager little prattler.

"Oh, father, there's lots of things come home to-day; and Alice and me buyed a present for you, we did. It's a pretty new inkstand for your study-table, only you mustn't tell anybody; and we buyed a little glass lady for mother; and then Alice showed me what to buy for her, and I showed her what to buy for me, and then I went away to the other side of the store so I wouldn't see her buy it, and she went away while I buyed her present, 'cause it's a great secret, you know."

"Yes, I suppose it is," said her father. She had followed him into his dressing-room, and stood looking at him while he prepared himself for dinner.

"And I'm to eat dinner with you to-day, father; and I'm to have two nuts at dessert,—mother said so. Only two, because it's too late for little girls to eat nuts. And you'll give me a sip of coffee out of your own cup; won't you, father? 'cause it's Christmas Eve, and we'll have the greatest fun;" and she danced about with delight as she spoke. "There's the dinner-bell; now come, father. Carry me down, just this once, 'cause next Christmas I'll be six years old, and then I'll be too big to be carried."

He took her in his arms and carried her down the stairs, and surely no merrier party ever gathered round a table than that which sat in the Grahams' dining-room that evening. The voices of the children filled the room with music, and as the father sat idling over his nuts and fruit after dinner, listening to their accounts of their shopping for Christmas presents and their joyous anticipations of the morrow, he felt as if no man in all the great city of New York had such a pleasant home as his.

By-and-by he left his happy little ones with their mother and went into his study to take an after-dinner nap. It was a very cosey room, with its windows hung with heavy curtains, and the warm glow of a blazing fire playing over the dark wainscoting and lighting up fitfully the pictures on the walls. He drew a large arm-chair into the

glow of the firelight, and, seating himself in it, prepared himself to enjoy to the full the comforts around him. Just then the door opened softly, little feet crossed the floor, and some one came to his side, looked at his closed eyes and quiet face, and then pushing a chair behind that in which he sat, mounted upon it and began to toy with his hair. He roused himself enough to say, "That's a darling!" and then gave himself up to his nap, thinking that he should fall asleep at once. But he was mistaken. Something in the sound of that footstep had reminded him of another child, whom he had seen that day,—a child whose feet lagged wearily as she led her little sister into their home; and his busy thoughts began to compare the ragged, tired crossing-sweeper, with his own richly-dressed child, whose brow had never yet been shaded by one thought of care. For some time he sat there, thinking too deeply for sleep; but by-and-by the soothing influence of those fingers, stealing in and out through his hair, had its effect upon him, and when he felt a soft kiss drop upon his forehead, and heard his little daughter slip gently down from her chair and seat herself quietly at his side, he was too drowsy to thank her.

It seemed but a moment after that he heard a slight noise behind him, and, turning, he saw a figure, but half clad, and trembling with the cold, holding by the hand a smaller child. She did not speak, but raising her hand, beckoned to him, and went out into the street. Something impelled him to rise and follow her. She walked swiftly on. Reaching Broadway, she mingled in the crowd of people who thronged the side-walk, holding out her hand to one and another as they passed, with a pitiful "Please, a penny."

At the first sound of that voice he started, and tried to come nearer to the suppliant. The figure was like that of the girl whom he had met on the preceding day, but that voice was strangely familiar; and with a terrible fear at

his heart he pushed his way through the crowd, trying to approach her closely enough to see her face. He could not reach her, but as she made a step forward to address another passenger, the light from a gas-lamp above fell on her face. It was no longer round and fair: there was no rosy colour on the cheeks, no light in the dark eyes; but he knew it. Pale and thin and worn, pinched by hunger and want, it was the face of his own daughter, Alice; and looking down at the child whose hand she grasped, he saw his happy-hearted, buoyant little Bessie. But the buoyancy was all gone now, and, as his eyes fixed themselves on her, she drew a ragged cape, which covered her shoulders, closer round her, and sobbed out, "Oh, Alice, take me home; it's so bitter cold."

The words were spoken in the very tone — oh, how it went home to his heart now! — the very tone in which he had heard them spoken by the crossing-sweeper's little sister. It had touched him even then, for, impatient as he had been with Maggie, he was not a hard-hearted man. Naturally grave and stern both in face and manner, he seldom smiled on any children but his own; yet he was ready to aid them when he could; and his heart had smitten him for his harsh speech the moment after it was uttered. But now, when he recognized in the speaker his own little Bessie, he sprang toward her with a cry; but she did not heed him. He tried to speak to her, to touch her; but his voice gave no sound, and although he was close beside her, his hand could not reach her.

And still they went on, and he followed them, noting every unkind word that was spoken to them, hearing every quaver in Alice's broken voice, seeing every tear which flowed over Bessie's purple cheeks, and all the while unable to help them. On and on, over the snow and ice with bare feet and uncovered heads, went the little travellers, until at length they reached a shop where, upon a stand outside, were ranged fruits of all kinds. The children

stopped, and he could see the hungry, craving look in the eyes which rested greedily on the tempting fruit.

"Oh, Alice, take one big apple," said Bessie; "only one. Nobody will see, and I'm so dreadful hungry."

"It's wicked to steal. I can't steal. Oh, Bessie, don't ask me with such a begging voice. Come, come," and Alice dragged her on away from the stand.

"I can't go any farther," sobbed Bessie. "Let's sit down here. Take me in your lap."

Alice sat down on the kerbstone, took the trembling child upon her knee, and tried to soothe and comfort her. By-and-by she lay quiet in her arms. The father drew nearer, and, bending over her shoulder, looked into Bessie's face. A dull grey shadow was creeping over it—a shadow which he knew; and, with a wild effort to break the chain which held him from them, he sprang forward, crying out, "My darling shall not die!"—and woke.

"My father, what made you groan and start so?" said Alice, rising from her seat beside him.

He sat up in his chair and looked at her, scarcely able to persuade himself that all this had been but a dream. But when she laid her rosy face upon his breast he folded his arms around her, and pressed her to him with such an earnest "Thank God, my darling, you are safe!" that Alice looked up in surprise.

"My father, I wasn't in any danger," she said wonderingly. "I've just been sitting here beside you while mother was upstairs with Bessie."

He kissed her, but did not speak for a few moments, and then, taking his watch from his pocket, he said, hurriedly,—

"It's only half-past eight. I will go to-night. God only knows what may happen before morning."

"Are you going out to-night, father? It is so very cold, and the wind is dreadful! William says it's growing colder and colder every minute."

"That only makes it all the more necessary for me to

go. Good-night, my precious child. Thank God, my little Alice, that you have such a comfortable home!"

"Yes, father," she said, softly, awed by his unusual manner. Her mother had often taught her to be grateful to God, but this was the first time her father had spoken such words to her.

"I will run up and kiss Bessie for good-night before I go," he said, as he left the room.

He felt as if he could not leave the house until he had assured himself of the child's safety. He went into the nursery and bent over her crib. She lay there, the picture of health and happiness, one little hand hidden beneath her flushed cheek, while the other lay round and dimpled upon the counterpane. He lifted one of the long curls which strayed over the pillow, touched his lips to it, and then bent lower to kiss the lovely face. "Thank God!" he said once more, in that deep, low voice, and then he left her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAILY BREAD SENT.

It was after nine o'clock when Mr. Graham reached the little wooden tenement into which he had seen the children pass about half-past five o'clock that afternoon. He went in at the door through which they had entered, but finding the entry entirely dark, turned back to ask whether the keeper of the shop could tell him anything of them.

"Can you tell me," he asked of a man who stood behind the small counter, "whether there are any children living in this house?"

"I guess I know as much about it as any one does," replied the man, in a surly tone. "The house is mine, and I rent the rooms out. I know everybody in it."

"Perhaps you can help me then," said Mr. Graham, apparently unmindful of his disagreeable manner. "I'm looking for a girl whose first name is Maggie. Her surname I do not know; nor do I know anything else about her, except that she is a crossing-sweeper, and has a younger sister named Amy."

"You're all right," answered the man. "I know who you mean. They live down in the basement of this house."

"The basement?" repeated Mr. Graham. "Why, this house stands on the street!"

"Well, call it cellar, then, if you will; but we always say basement, because it sounds better when we're trying to rent it. But what might you want with the girl?"

"I want to know what sort of people they are. Are they honest and industrious?"

"Yes. I guess they're honest enough. They always pay up the rent in the end if not in advance, and I never heard of their stealing anything. As for industrious, the mother's been sick a-bed pretty much ever since they came here, which was near a year ago; but the girl, she works like a young horse, they say. I don't know much about them, though. So long as I get my rent, that's all I look to."

"Can you give me a light?" said Mr. Graham, shortly. "I want to go down to their room."

"Yes. I'll loan you a light. Here, Jim," he called to a boy, sitting in an inner room, "show this gentleman down to the basement. Be civil now, and maybe he'll give you something for your Christmas."

"I will pay you for your trouble," said Mr. Graham, as he followed the boy from the store. "What, down in that place!" he exclaimed, as his leader paused, at the head of the stone steps, to warn him to be careful.

"Yes, sir,—right down here. These steps are very icy, sir. Take care."

"But do you mean that these people,—that sick woman and her children, are in that cellar? Why, it isn't fit for a dog to live in on a night like this!"

They had reached the door of the room. Mr. Graham knocked, and a feeble voice bade them come in, in a strangely entreating manner.

"Oh, who is it?" said the same voice, as they entered. "Do see to Maggie. She must have fainted or something, and I can't get up to go to her. The baby has been crying this long time, and she takes no notice, nor she don't answer me. Maggie! Maggie dear!" she went on, as by the light of the lamp she saw the girl crouching down before the stove. "Rise up, dear. Here's a gentleman."

Mr. Graham stood still for a moment, looking at the sad picture. On a bed on one side of the stove cowered four little children, all gazing in terrified silence at the figure in front of the stove, so still and motionless; and on the opposite side, on another miserable straw-bed, lay the helpless mother, while in the farther corner stood that sad attempt at a Christmas jubilee,—that poor broken bough, with its seven bits of red-and-white candy tied upon it.

The next moment he had crossed the room and bent over Maggie. An exclamation rose to his lips as he touched her and turned her face up to the light, but he checked it, for the woman lying there was her mother, and he remembered the anguish which had wrung his own heart in his dream that night when he saw the dull, grey shadow creep over the face of *his* child.

"She must be taken out of this place. It is worse than the street," he said, lifting from the stiffened arms the baby, whose life had been preserved by its close contact with the freezing little body which had shielded it.

"Carry this child upstairs," he said abruptly, turning to the boy who stood lamp in hand, looking silently on, "and I will take the girl. Your child is insensible from this frightful cold, madam," he continued, turning to the

frightened mother, "and she must be attended to at once. I will send you help immediately."

In another instant he was gone. Up those slippery steps, into the house, into Mr. Hill's store, he went with long strides, which brought him quickly to his journey's end.

"I want some strong, hot coffee, and a bed, at once," he said authoritatively. "This child is frozen."

"But, look here, sir," objected Mr. Hill.

"Not one 'but' will I listen to. Give me what I want or I will have you arrested for wantonly leaving a helpless woman and her children to freeze to death on your premises. Is there a woman in this house?" he asked of the boy.

"Yes, sir,—two of them."

"Call them down."

They came willingly, and Mr. Graham turned once more to the boy,—

"Go up to No. 47 in this street, and tell Dr. Rome, who lives there, that Mr. Graham wants to see him at once, on a case of life and death. You will find him at home. Then cross the street to No. 48, and tell the man who opens the door to give this to Mrs. Graham."

He put into the boy's hand a paper on which was written, "Let William bring you to me at once. I have found a family here in fearful distress, and I need a woman's help."

Orders given in Mr. Graham's determined voice and manner were not to be disobeyed. In twenty minutes after he had carried Maggie into Mr. Hill's store she lay on a comfortable bed, with the two women chafing her frozen limbs, while Mr. Graham tried from time to time to force a little coffee between the firmly-set teeth. For a long time it seemed as if all their efforts were fruitless. But by-and-by the sluggish blood began to flow through the veins, the rigid limbs relaxed and became softer to the

touch, and with a long, weary sigh, Maggie opened her eyes. The next moment she closed them again; but they knew that her life was saved.

Meanwhile Mr. Graham had sent help to the frightened and bewildered inmates of the basement, and they had all been brought up from their wretched abode. The mother lay on the bed in the room of one of the women who had come down to Maggie's assistance, having been carried there by Mr. Graham, assisted by the landlord himself, who had been so much startled by that gentleman's threat of placing him under arrest, that he was more than willing to aid him in every possible way. The room was but a poor, mean place at the best, the whole house being rather a tumble-down affair; but the windows were whole, and a bright fire burned in the stove, and it seemed a sort of little heaven to the suffering mother and children.

"Amy," said Mary, as they sat close by the stove, enjoying to the full the delicious warmth, and busily engaged in eating huge slices of bread and butter, "I guess this is the first time we ever had a good big bit of bread and a warm fire the same day. Maggie told us God would send it by-and-by. And He did,—didn't He?"

"Yes," said Amy, with her mouth as full as it could hold. "Aint God good to little girls?"

When Maggie opened her eyes again, they met a look so sweet and tender, from a face bending over her, that she asked in a soft whisper,—

"Is it an angel?"

There was no answer given. The whisper was so low that it had not been heard; so Maggie spoke again:—

"Is this heaven?"

"No, dear. This is not heaven," said a voice as gentle as the face.

"Then is it only a beautiful lady?" asked Maggie, in the same low tone.

"It is only a lady; yes. What did you think it was, my child?"

"I thought it was an angel. Has Jesus come?"

Mrs. Graham, the lady who was watching her, thought that her mind was wandering, so she said kindly,—

"Don't talk any more now, dear. Lie still and rest."

"But I want to know so bad," said Maggie. "Please tell me, did He come? I did all I could, and then I just waited for Him to do the rest. Margery said He would."

"I don't quite know what you mean, my child."

"Why, Jesus gives us our daily bread, you know, and the children had no bread nor fire, and we were waiting for him: did He send it?"

"Yes, He sent it. The children are fast asleep upstairs, and your mother, too. They are all very comfortable."

"I knew He would send it some time," said Maggie, earnestly, "'cause He always does: but, oh, He was long coming to-night, and it was so dreadful cold! He was so long coming, that if it had been any one else I'd a'most thought He'd forgot all about His promise. But then, Jesus never does forget."

"No, never," said the lady.

"Is this Mr. Hill's room?" asked Maggie, after a few moments' silence.

"Yes: you are in the room behind the store."

"Is it night yet, or is it morning?"

"It is a little after midnight. My husband came here and found you sick with the cold, and brought you up into this room. We have been waiting here until you were better, but I think we may leave you now. This woman is going to sit up with you, and I shall come back in the morning. Good-night."

"Good-night, dear lady. Do angels look like you?"

The lady only smiled and kissed her forehead.

"If they do," said Maggie, "heaven must be very beautiful."

It was a new, strange feeling to the child to rest there, perfectly at ease, feeling that she was closely watched and tended. A strange feeling, but a very pleasant one. It was delightful to lie in that sort of doze, with a shaded lamp burning on the hearth, and the room so still that she could hear the very breathing of her nurse, with no troubling thoughts of the morrow pressing upon her. For a long while she lay in that state of wakeful repose, and then she sank into a soft refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO LITTLE SANTA CLAUSES.

"MERRY Christmas, father! merry Christmas!" was the cry which awakened Mr. Graham the next morning.

He would have been glad if his morning nap had not been broken into quite so early, for his night's rest had been but short; but sleeping was entirely out of the question with a tiny sprite in a white night-dress, dancing about the room in the highest state of excitement over a well-filled stocking which she held in her hand, and so he roused himself up to lift her on the bed, for the little rose-tinted feet were bare, and he feared that she might take cold.

"See, father, see!" exclaimed Bessie, pouring out her treasures upon the bed. "There is a box of cream-drops, and a beautiful ring, and lots of candies and mottoes; and see, father, what Santa Claus has put in here! I guess he's made a mistake, and meant this box for somebody else, because I don't know how to play with such a funny-looking thing."

She had drawn from the stocking a small black box, prettily carved, and, opening it, displayed it to her father.

"It's got a kind of a round thing in there, and that's all covered with little pricklers. And there's a thing like a comb in it. I could use that comb for my dolly's hair, only I can't get hold of it, 'cause there's a glass over it. What did Santa Claus give me such a queer thing for, father?"

"Did Santa Claus leave a key in the box?" said Mr. Graham.

"Yes, it's somewhere in here," said Bessie, plunging her hand into the depths of the stocking. "Here it is, right down in the toe; the tiniest little key that ever you saw. Look!" and she held it up before him, expecting him to close the box and lock it.

But instead of that, he placed the key in a small hole in the side, turned it once or twice, and laid the box down on a table which stood at the head of the bed. For a moment Bessie sat in silent surprise, and then, with one quick bound, she sprang from the bed, crying out,—O Alice! Alice! come quick. That box in my stocking had a music shut up in it, and it's coming out. Come quick, before it all runs out. Oh, it's too beautiful! it's too beautiful!" and she danced about in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

Alice came running in, as if in answer to her call; but, to Bessie's great surprise, she paid no heed whatever to the tinkling music of the box, but ran straight to her mother; and even Bessie's attention was diverted from her treasure when she saw that Alice's face was wet with tears.

"Crying on Christmas!" she exclaimed, in dismay. "Why, Alice, no one ever cries on Christmas!"

"I don't believe it's true," sobbed Alice. "Mother, Jane says that father found a little girl almost frozen to death last night, and she hadn't any bread to eat, and she was nearly dead, and she kept the baby warm when she was freezing herself, and the mother's very sick, and they were all in a cellar under a house, and the little girl had nothing but an old torn frock on, and—and ——"

But here Alice paused for breath, fairly exhausted by her own vehemence.

"It is true, my darling," said her mother, taking her on her lap. "That sad story is all true; but the poor people have been made more comfortable, and we must see what we can do for them to-day."

"Why didn't the little girl have any bread to eat?" asked Bessie, wonderingly.

"Because the mother had none to give her, and they were so poor that they had no money to buy any," said her mother.

"Then why didn't she take a piece of cake, or some rice and chicken? I think rice and chicken is ever so much better than bread: it's real good."

"But there was *nothing* there to eat, Bessie; nothing at all," said Alice: "no bread, nor meat, nor potatoes, nor anything."

"O Alice!" exclaimed Bessie, very incredulously.

"It's true, mother says it is," said her sister. "And Jane says, that when the little girl got better, the first thing she wanted to know was whether the daily bread had come for the other children. She says the prayer just like we do, Bessie. Don't you know how we always say, 'Give us this day our daily bread?'"

"Yes," replied Bessie. "I'm sorry for her if she had nothing to eat; but maybe there is something good in her stocking this morning. I wonder if Santa Claus took her a box with music in it?"

"Santa Claus did not go to see her at all, dear," said Mrs. Graham. "How would my two little girls like to be the Santa Claus for those poor children to-day?"

"Oh, that would be nice!" said Alice, eagerly: "wouldn't it, Bessie?"

"Yes," said Bessie. "Only we haven't got the long white hair, nor the reindeer for the sleigh, nor the bags full of toys."

"Oh, we can be a play Santa Claus!" said Alice. "That will do just as well: won't it, mother?"

"Yes, just as well. Now, Bessie, run into the nursery and let Jane dress you. I am afraid that you will take cold."

Away ran the little girls to their nurse, and in a few moments their father and mother heard through the open door an earnest discussion as to which of their cherished treasures it was best to take to the children, whom Santa Claus had so entirely forgotten. Alice had at last succeeded in impressing upon Bessie's mind the truth, that these children had actually nothing to make Christmas a happy day to them, and she was now as anxious as Alice herself to do all she could for them; but held fast to the idea that hungry people ought to have plenty of cake and candy, and was quite indignant with Jane for suggesting that they might prefer meat and potatoes.

Breakfast that morning was not a very quiet meal. Alice and Bessie were full of plans for the relief of Maggie, and her brothers and sisters, and no persuasions could induce them to eat their breakfast first and discuss their many projects afterward.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Alice," said Bessie. "We'll go to see them right after breakfast, and we'll take them the big box of candy Uncle John sent us, and some nuts and oranges. Jane says they will want roast potatoes, and such things, too; so we'll just put a basket with a few potatoes in the carriage, but we'll tell them that they needn't eat one if they don't want to."

"But I want them to come here," said Alice. "I'd like to go to where they live, and bring them home with me. Jane says they haven't got clothes; but we could lend them some. I'll wear my old hat and cloak, and Maggie could have my best things, and you could let the smaller girl have something of yours. Couldn't you, Bessie?"

"Oh, yes, that would be nice! May we go, mother? I don't mind giving my clothes to that little girl, and it would be a lovely Christmas if we had them here. We'd give them lots of toys, and then they'd laugh, and be so glad, and that would make us glad—wouldn't it, father? May we go just as soon as Henry can bring the carriage?"

"I have a better plan than that, Bessie," said her mother. "I would not like to have you and Alice go to the place where these people live; but they can come here and spend their Christmas-day with you, and you shall give them any of your toys. But it will not be necessary for you to give away your own clothes; for you know that I have plenty of little dresses and other things for poor people who may need them. My plan is for Jane to go to see the children, and have them all nicely dressed, and then she can bring them home to you, and you shall take care of them all day long. Will that not be the best way?"

"But then it will be so long before they come," said Bessie, rather dolefully. "Why, it takes Jane ever so long to wash and dress me in the morning, and there'll be six children to do."

"It will take some little time, dear, but that cannot be helped. While Jane is away you can be choosing out the things which you want to give them for their presents, and there are so many to provide for that you will have enough to do. I expect that you will have to come to mother for some help, with so many to take care of."

"Oh, no; Bessie, let's do it all ourselves," said Alice. "We've got plenty of things for six children, and it would be such fun to give them their whole Christmas. Mother, please don't help us: will you?"

"No, not if you like best to do it alone; but six children is a large family to provide for, Alice."

"Oh, I'll tell you, Alice!" exclaimed Bessie. "We'll

play we were two big ladies, making a Christmas for some poor people. Don't you like that?" she added, rather hesitatingly, for her little sister's face had not caught the light of her own.

"I don't think that would be such a good way, Bessie. I feel about that as I do about running past the lame boy who lives next door. I always walk very slow when I see him, because I'm afraid he'd feel bad if he saw me run and jump, and knew he couldn't do anything but just limp along so slowly. And I'm afraid the little girls would feel as if it wasn't quite play. I think it would be better to play that we are all poor, and that a good lady had given us a lot of things, and told us to give some to them. Would that do?"

"Yes, and mother could be the good lady. That would be nice, 'cause then she would be in the play, and then she wouldn't be lonesome. I wouldn't like to have the dear mother lonesome," she said, slipping her hand into Mrs. Graham's as she spoke.

"You'll take good care of me, won't you?" said her mother, bending to kiss her. "And now you had better run upstairs and look over your stores of playthings, while I send Jane to attend to the children."

They found the task of suiting the different tastes of a whole family quite a serious undertaking, and more than once the mother was called in to decide whether Maggie would be best pleased with a toy or a book; whether Mary's doll should be dressed in blue or in pink; and whether Amy's preference would be for a woolly dog or a waggon.

The last important question had just been decided when, to Bessie's great surprise, there was a knock at the door, and Jane's voice said, "I have brought the children, Mrs. Graham. They are downstairs."

CHAPTER VIII.

MAGGIE'S CHRISTMAS.

THE nursery of Mrs. Graham's house was as bright and pleasant as a room could well be made. The soft green carpet was strewn over with roses and lilies, and the walls were covered with paper, on which plump little cherubs were festooning garlands of flowers; while pictures of rosy-cheeked children smiled down from their places on the wall, and a large engraving of our Saviour blessing the little ones hung over the mantelpiece, the gentle face of the Master looking as if He were again about to speak those tender words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

The nursery was not generally a very quiet room, echoing as it did the ring of childish laughter, the sound of dancing feet, and the merry prattle of happy hearts. But just now it was very still. The soft eyes of the pictures looked in vain for their usual companions, gazing with a steady watchfulness, as if longing for the return of their friends. By-and-by there came the sound of the patter of little feet, and the next moment the watchful eyes rested on a scene such as they had never witnessed since they had first looked down from those walls.

In the doorway stood Alice, supporting, with her arm around her waist, a girl who had just been placed upon her feet by William, in whose strong arms she had been carried upstairs.

"What is the matter?" asked Alice, surprised by her visitor's sudden pause upon the door-sill. "Can't you walk? Shall I call William back?"

"No, I can walk," said Maggie, for it was she who had

leaned upon Alice. "But this is so beautiful. Do you step on those lovely flowers?"

"Oh, yes! it won't hurt them at all," said Alice.

"But don't the paint come off?"

"Why, no," exclaimed Bessie, who was following close behind with the four younger children, the baby having been left in the care of the woman who was tending the mother. "Just look here." She ran past Alice and Maggie into the nursery, and standing before them, rubbed her foot briskly back and forth upon the carpet.

"Look at that," she said, hopping backward upon one foot, while she held up the other, turning the sole upward for Maggie's inspection: "don't you see, it's just as brown and ugly as ever? Those colours won't come out."

Thus reassured, Maggie ventured to proceed, very carefully however, and Alice led her to a couch and made her lie down upon it.

"You are so pale and tired," said Alice, looking pityingly down upon the thin face.

"Oh, I don't mind," replied Maggie, cheerfully; "it's so nice to rest. I never had such a good rest in all my life;" and she laid her head back upon the pillow with a look of perfect content and enjoyment, which Alice, who had never known what it was to ache in every limb with utter weariness, could not appreciate.

She stood watching her for a moment, and then turned to her other visitors. Bessie was already playing Santa Claus, and the children were standing around her, quietly receiving the gifts she showered down upon them, too much surprised to make the smallest response. They had been from the first rather bewildered by her vigorous attentions. She had burst upon them with such a torrent of questions, had given them such an amount of information, had pressed upon them such a variety of articles of food, and urged them so constantly to go the fire and warm themselves, that they stood around her, very close to each other,

making no attempt to reply (and indeed she had given them no opportunity); merely gazing at her in amazement. Matronly little Alice came to the rescue at once.

"Don't talk so loud and so fast, Bessie," she said softly; "I think the children are rather frightened. Wait one minute. All the girls have something now, but the boy hasn't a single thing. What have we got for him?"

"I don't know," said Bessie, glancing over the table on which the gifts for their new friends were laid. "I didn't know there was a boy. I don't believe mother told us there was one."

"Yes, she did; but we forgot it. What shall we do?" and Alice looked greatly distressed.

All at once her face brightened again, and she said, "I know what we can do, only I must ask mother first;" and she ran away into her mother's room.

"Mother," she said, coming very close to her, and speaking low lest the children in the nursery might hear, "we've forgotten the little boy, and there's nothing for him unless I give him Charlie's drum."

The last words were spoken in a whisper, for Charlie, Alice's only brother, had left her two years before. They often talked of him, but his name was always softly spoken, for Jesus had "called the little child unto Him."

"You do not want to give that away, Alice?" said her mother. "William can go and buy a drum for the boy."

"But then, it wouldn't be quite all our Christmas," said Alice. "And, mother, I thought it would be very sweet to let Charlie help us in our Christmas for these poor children. I think he will be glad to feel, that even when he is away in heaven he can help to make the children here happy. Don't you think so, mother?"

"Yes, darling."

"Jane told me I was to keep it to remember Charlie by," said Alice; "but I am sure I could never forget him: and besides, I have that dear little curl he gave me the morning

he died. I think that Sammy had better have the drum."

"Very well, dear. You may give it to him."

There were two bright tears in Mrs. Graham's eyes. Alice saw them, and put up her hand to wipe them away as she whispered,—

"I guess Charlie's looking right down at us, mother dear, and I'm sure he feels glad."

When Alice returned to the nursery with the drum, Bessie met her at the door in still another perplexity.

"O Alice," she said, "we didn't find out anything about what Maggie liked. What shall we give her?"

"I'll ask her," said Alice. "Maybe she'd like a book. Maggie, we didn't quite know what to choose for you," she said, seating herself on the edge of the couch close beside her; "I suppose you're most too old for playthings?"

"Yes. I don't care much about dolls and things; but it don't make any difference. The children's got plenty, and I'll do very well without."

"But wouldn't you like a book?"

"I don't know how to read, so books aint much good to me. Don't fret about it, it's plenty of Christmas for me just to lie here."

"Oh, but you must have a Christmas present. Can't you think of anything, Bessie?"

"No," said Bessie, in a very decided tone. But the next moment the colour flushed warmly over her face and neck, and she said hesitatingly, "I don't know either. Maybe I do think of something, only—only——"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Alice, noticing her unusual manner; but, without making any reply, Bessie ran quickly out of the room.

Alice looked wonderingly at Maggie; but, no longer called upon to take an active part in the conversation, Maggie was gazing dreamily at the pictures on the wall, paying no heed whatever to what passed around her.

Bessie crossed the hall, and, entering the bedroom which she shared with Alice, went to a bureau standing opposite the door, and kneeling down before it opened the lower drawer. Far back in one corner of this drawer stood a box, which she lifted out, and, sitting down on the floor, she placed it on her lap and opened it. Lying within, wrapped in silver paper, was something which she took in her hand and looked at meditatively. Twice she shook her curly head over it, as much as to say, "No, I will not do it;" and finally she put the neatly-folded package into the box again, and shut down the cover very energetically. "I don't believe she'll care for it," she said to herself, as she hastily closed the drawer, having put the box back in its place, "and I want it such a great deal myself."

But she had scarcely risen to her feet, and turned to leave the room, before she paused again.

"Bessie Graham," she said, raising her forefinger and shaking it as if she were scolding some one who stood before her, "you're just a selfish old thing. You *shall* give your music-box to that poor, tired, good Maggie, you bad girl!"

The drawer was opened once more, and snatching the silver paper from the package which lay in the box, Bessie disclosed the music-box which had in the morning afforded her so much delight. She looked at it very lovingly, and just before she entered the nursery she turned aside, and lifting it to her lips kissed it twice.

She found her mother in the nursery, and going to her, she whispered her intentions, and asked her to wind the box for her.

"But, Bessie, are you quite sure that you will not be sorry afterward if you give it away?" asked her mother.

"Yes, I'm just as sure as can be," said Bessie. "I was real mean about it at first, mother; but now I do really want Maggie to have it."

"Perhaps you had better let her hear it play before you give it to her. She may not care for music. We will

wind it up without saying anything, and see whether she enjoys it very much."

When the box was ready, Mrs. Graham set it on the mantelpiece and stood where she could see Maggie's face, while Bessie stood close beside her, watching very eagerly.

The instant the soft notes of the tinkling music fell on her ear Maggie lifted her head from the pillow, from which nothing had tempted her to move since she had first laid it there, and listened with a look of vague wonder in her face. Gradually the wondering look passed away, to give place to one of perfect delight.

"Oh, what is it?" she said 'at last, in a low tone. "It's like the music they have in the grand, big churches, only it's so soft and sweet, and there's the ring of little bells in it. Where does it come from? Is it from the sky?"

"No, no, it's out of that box there," cried Bessie, clapping her hands.

"Oh, don't speak so loud," said Maggie, "'cause then we can't hear it. Oh, aint it too beautiful!"

"It's for you, Maggie," said Bessie, in a gentler tone.

"It's for your own, to keep always."

"For me? Is that for me?" said Maggie, tremulously, and then she hid her face in the pillow.

It had been such a happy, happy day, that this last drop of joy made the full cup to overflow, and the brave young heart, which had borne hunger and cold and weariness without faltering or flinching, broke down beneath this weight of love and kindness.

"Alice," said Mrs. Graham, "I think that you and Bessie had better take the children into the sitting-room and show them the pictures in the stereoscope. Jane is there, and she will help you."

Maggie raised her head as soon as the children were gone, and looking at Mrs. Graham, who had drawn a chair close to the lounge on which she lay, said,—

"I'm sorry I cried, ma'am, but it was so beautiful I couldn't help it; and the dear little girl is so very, very good."

"You need not be sorry, my child," said Mrs. Graham. "Have you had a happy day?"

"Oh, yes; it's been just as nice as could be. I never had such a rest."

"I sent the children away, Maggie, because I wanted to have a little talk with you. And first of all, I must set your mind fully at rest with regard to the future. Your mother and the baby have been taken to the house of a woman whom I know, who will do all she can for them, and you and the children are to go there this evening. I have rented two comfortable rooms for you."

"Do you mean you've paid the rent, ma'am?" asked Maggie, looking at her with very wide-open eyes.

"Yes, I've paid the rent; so you need not feel at all anxious on that account."

"Oh, what can I say?" said Maggie. "I never heard of such a thing!"

"Didn't you?" and Mrs. Graham laughed—a little sadly perhaps, for Maggie's utter surprise told her how little charity she had met with in her life.

"You have had hard hearts to deal with, I am afraid, my poor child."

"Hard!" repeated the girl. "I guess they was hard. But there was One that wasn't," she added more gently.

"Who was that, Maggie?"

"Jesus. He was always good. I don't know how ever I'd have lived through all these many hard days past if it hadn't been for Him. I remember one night,—it was the worst this winter except last night,—I was dreadful, dreadful hungry, and I went out after the children was in 'bed to try to beg some scraps. No one would give me a bit of victuals, so I was coming home hungrier than ever, and I stopped before the baker's shop to get the smell of

the fresh cake. Sometimes, when I'm so very hungry, the smell of things to eat makes me kind of sick, and then for a while the hunger gets better. 'Taint a very nice feeling, but it's better than hunger. Well, this evening I stopped before the shop, but it didn't do no good,—it only made me worse than ever. It seemed as if I *must* have something to eat, and just then I noticed two rolls lying on the counter. The baker was way off to the other end of the store, and I knew he'd never see me, and it seemed as if I must run in and snatch those rolls up. I didn't know what I should do. I wanted them so bad that I didn't dare go past the door for fear I couldn't help going in; and you know Jesus can't bear to have little girls steal. So I just clasped my hands close behind me, and said, 'Please, dear Jesus, don't let my hands come undone till I'm way past the shop,' and then I ran just as fast as I could past the shop, and down the street, home. And He helped me keep my hands tight together so I couldn't take the rolls. Wasn't He good? Why, you aint crying, ma'am, are you?" asked Maggie, for, on looking up for the answer to her first question, she saw that the kind eyes were full of tears. "Don't cry, ma'am, for I guess the worst is over now."

"I hope it is, Maggie. I had not finished what I had to tell you. The woman in whose house you are to live is a dress-maker, and she wants an errand-girl. I spoke to her of you, and she says that she will take you as soon as you are strong enough. Your mother tells me that she is a good seamstress when she is well, and as the doctor who saw her last night thinks that with good care and nursing she may soon be cured, I see no reason why you will not be able to take care of yourselves before long."

"She can sew first-rate," said Maggie. "Why, before father took sick, three years back, she used to make us real nice clothes, and they was sewed real good! But when father'd been bad about a year, she got sick herself by

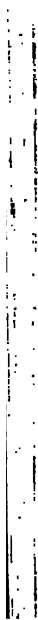
spells, and by-and-by she got worse, till now she's as bad as this. But I guess she'll be better now that we're out of that cellar. He's done just what He said He would."

"Who, Maggie?"

"The Lord Jesus," said Maggie, softly. "Margery said He'd come when I called to Him, and give me all I needed, if I did what I could myself. I only asked Him for daily bread, and He's given me a nice home, and a doctor for mother, and toys for the children, and the music-box, and this dear good lady, who is the best of all:" and Maggie caught one of Mrs. Graham's hands in hers. "I do wish I knew some words to tell you how I thank you," she said, earnestly.

"It is your dear Lord Jesus to whom you owe it all, Maggie."

"Yes," said the girl, looking up toward the deep blue sky from which the light was fast fading; "yes, He sent it all, I know. But I don't need to look for words to thank Him. It does just as well for Him without any words. I haven't said much, but He knows I've been just thinking 'dear, precious Lord Jesus,' all day long."



ROSY CONROY'S LESSONS.

“ Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors.”

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ROSY CONROY'S LESSONS.

CHAPTER I.

ROSY'S SCHOOL.

ROSY CONROY stood in the yard, leaning upon the pump, and looking down thoughtfully into the pail, into which the water ran slowly from the half-turned faucet that she held in her hand. A boy who stood at the open window of the basement had just called out to her, in a rough, loud voice, that she must not splash the stones, adding a rude threat to his command, and Rosy was thinking sorrowfully of a little friend who had lived in that basement only a few months before. But the little friend, and the old grandfather with whom she had lived, had both gone home to the "Happy Land," and strangers occupied the low room which Rosy had once so loved to visit.

"Oh, I wish Margery was there yet!" she said to herself with a sigh, as she leaned over her pail idly watching the trickling stream of water.

"Rosy, Rosy child!" called a voice from the window above her.

"Yes, mother, I'm coming," cried Rosy; and turning on the full force of the water, she filled her pail to the brim, and, lifting it with both hands, went toward the house, splashing the water at every step over her bare feet and ankles.

"I'll be out after you if you don't stop spilling that water," called the boy from the basement. "I'm just after cleaning the yard."

"The—water—won't—dirty—it," panted Rosy, as she struggled up the steps with her heavy burden.

She had answered him carelessly, but when, a moment after, she entered her mother's room and set the pail down upon the floor, Mrs. Conroy saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Why, Rosy dear, what is it, then?" she asked, tenderly, drawing the child to her and wiping her flushed cheek with her apron.

"Nothing," said Rosy, tremulously, "only that ugly boy in the basement is so cross; and I want Margery back there."

"And that's the sorrow, is it? Yes, yes, it's very sore to see them rough folks in the old room. But we mustn't want Margery back, dear. She's best off where she is, no doubt;" and the mother stroked her child's hair lovingly.

"Now, Rosy, it's time you were off to the school. Put on your bit of a hood and run away."

So Rosy tied on the worsted hood which her mother handed to her, and snatching a kiss from a tiny boy who sat playing on the floor, went out again.

Just as she reached Broadway, which she must cross going to school, she saw by the timepiece in a clock-maker's window that it was already nearly nine o'clock, and she went on at a quick pace, almost running, for she had only some squares to walk.

"Take care, Rosy, don't run over me," said a pleasant voice; and looking up, the little girl saw her Sunday-school teacher.

"Oh, Miss Raymond!" she exclaimed, joyfully, "I never met you in the street before, did I?"

"No, I think not. Are you going to school?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Rosy, her face changing.

"What is the matter? Don't you love to go?"

"Not to this one, Miss Raymond."

"What is wrong with this one?"

"It's so noisy; and the children won't study, and there don't seem to be anything to learn. I wish I could go to a public school. But it is getting late; I must go on."

"I will walk along with you," said Miss Raymond. "I want to know about this. How is it that there is nothing to learn?"

"I can't tell, Miss Raymond. But if you come in with me, maybe you'll know. I don't."

"But if you want to go to a public school, Rosy, why don't you go?"

The child glanced down at her bare feet, and her clean, but patched and faded dress.

"I couldn't be with nice children when I look so bad as this," she said. "Mother wants me to go too, but we're so poor she can't afford to keep me decent. My brother Will won't work a bit now, and you know my father is blind. He goes about with his dog, selling matches and needles, and such things, but he gets very little, and mother can't go out because of the twins. They're only three months old. And then there's Bobbie, he's two years old; and Susy, she's five. So, you see, mother can't go out if I go to school; and even if she could, she wouldn't earn enough to keep me fit for a good one."

"Why do you want to go to a better school so much?"

"I want to learn to be a teacher," said Rosy, eagerly. "If I could, then I'd take such good care of father and mother, and I'd buy clothes for the children, and — oh, I'd do everything!"

"How old are you, Rosy?" asked the lady, smiling.

"Nine, going on ten, ma'am."

They had by this time reached Rosy's destination, and Miss Raymond went in with her. She did not wonder

that a bright, intelligent child, fond of study and anxious to learn as much as possible, should long for something different from this. It was already past nine o'clock, but the children were running and playing about the room while the teacher stood at her desk, faintly commanding silence in a voice which could not be heard at a distance of six feet, in the din and clamour which might almost have drowned a shout.

"It is not always like this, Rosy, is it?" asked Miss Raymond.

"No, ma'am; they will sit down pretty soon, I guess. But they will talk all day long. I don't know what ails Miss Macy, but she can't seem to keep them quiet.

Miss Raymond could see at a glance what ailed her. She might have been a good teacher of a well-ordered private class of pupils, but she was a weak, inefficient woman, wholly inadequate to control the turbulent young spirits congregated in the industrial school over which she had been placed.

"And you don't like all this?" said Miss Raymond, looking down at the child, who still stood beside her.

"No, ma'am. I like fun as well as any of them; but it is not right to carry on so here. It's real mean to Miss Macy, too. I think it kind of frightens her, poor thing."

That decided Miss Raymond. She determined that, if it were possible, Rosy should have a teacher whom she should respect too much to call her "poor thing."

"Can you come to see me this afternoon, Rosy?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I think so," said the child, her eyes dancing with delight. "I'll ask my mother."

"Very well. Come, if she can spare you, and we will have a talk about your lessons;" and, after a few minutes' conversation with the unhappy teacher, the lady took her leave.

The walk to Miss Raymond's house that afternoon was very cold, but Rosy drew her thin shawl closely around

her shoulders and trotted on merrily. What mattered it if it were bleak? Was she not going to hear something about a new school where she might, perhaps, learn to be a teacher? Cold as she was, her heart was warm and glowing, and she ran on joyously in spite of the piercing wind, and the icy feeling of the pavement against her feet. By-and-by she reached the house, and rang the bell timidly.

"Please, sir, I'd like to see Miss Raymond," she said to the man who opened the door. "May I go up to her floor?"

"I will tell her," said the man, with an amused look. "What is your name?"

"Rosy, sir."

He led her across the hall, and, pointing to a small iron grating in the floor, said, "You may sit down by the register, and warm yourself; but don't put your foot on the iron,—it is hot."

To Rosy's great surprise a soft, warm air was coming up through this hole in the floor. She held her feet over it, and by-and-by a drowsy feeling began to steal over her; the heated air was making her sleepy after her long walk; and when the waiter returned, having been detained to receive a message, he found her fast asleep.

"I didn't say anything to her, Miss Lily," he said to Miss Raymond, when she came down five minutes later. "She's taking such pure comfort there."

Rosy's head had fallen back against the chair, and her hood had slipped off, leaving her flushed face fully exposed. She made a very pretty picture sitting there in the high-backed chair, with her hands folded in her lap and her bare feet hanging over the register.

"Poor little child, her walk has tired her out."

The sound of voices wakened Rosy, and she sprang up suddenly.

"Don't be frightened," said Miss Raymond, seeing that

she was startled. "You fell asleep over the fire, that is all."

"Won't the gentleman be angered at me falling asleep by his stove?" said Rosy anxiously. "He told me to wait here while he went to call you. Aint he got a queer little stove, Miss Raymond?"

"That is a register, Rosy."

"Is it? I've seen such holes in the street, by the big hotels sometimes, but such a lot of fire comes out of this, don't it? It's real nice. That's a good gentleman. Does he live on this floor?"

"No. This is my father's house, and he wants it all for his own family."

"He must be heaping rich," said Rosy, after a moment of surprised silence.

"Shall I tell you what he means to do with a part of his riches?" asked Miss Raymond, with a smile.

"Yes, ma'am," said Rosy, softly.

"He means to buy a dress, and a shawl, and a pair of shoes for a little girl who wants to go to a public school, and cannot because she has not fitting clothes."

"Not for me, Miss Raymond," said Rosy; "it can't be."

"But it can be. If your mother is willing that you should go, my father will obtain a place for you, if you will promise to study hard and to behave well."

"Oh, I'll be just as good, and I'll study ever so! What shall I say? It aint half enough to say thank you, is it? I'll always love you just as dear as dear can be;" and the eager, happy face pressed close to Miss Raymond in the child's delighted excitement.

She took it between her hands, as she said, "What put it into your head to want to be a teacher?"

"I don't know; but I always did want it. Margery Bray used to laugh, and say I was too romping and careless to be a teacher; but I mean to be one some of these days, and I used to tell her she'd see. Oh, I wish she

was here now! I used to love to have her with me in Sunday-school, and everywhere."

"Don't wish that, Rosy. She is so happy in heaven. She cannot come to us, but we can go to her. Are you trying to follow Margery's Master?"

"Yes, Miss Raymond, I do try. I've tried ever since she died. I think it was her made me love Him. When I was with her, it always seemed as if she was happier than me, and I wanted to be like her. I do love the dear Lord Jesus now."

"How much do you love Him, Rosy? Would you be ready to give up everything for His sake?"

"Yes, I think so," said Rosy, thoughtfully.

"I hope you would, dear. Now you had better go home again, and I will come down and talk to your mother about the new school. Here are some little cakes for you and the other children."

Rosy took the offered bundle with many thanks, and ran off with a light heart to tell her happiness to her mother.

CHAPTER II.

ROSY'S HOME.

NEVER was there a brighter face than that which Rosy wore as she ran toward home on this cold November afternoon. It was sundown before she left Miss Raymond's house, and the sun, who had hidden himself behind dark grey clouds all the afternoon, concluded to take one little peep at the earth before he went to rest. So he broke through the thick curtains which shrouded his light and shone out radiantly for a few moments.

The little girl looked up gladly to welcome the sweet sunset light, and her face seemed to catch the soft glow which fell all around her. It hid itself among her curls,

and kindled a new beauty in her sparkling eyes ; and, shining upon her round cheeks, laid there lovingly, as if it could not bear to leave anything so fair and soft. And the child danced on blithely, singing as she went, and weary men and toil-worn women turned and looked after her, thanking God for the sight.

She reached her home just in time to catch up little Rob, who had toddled to the door-sill, and stepping over it on his unsteady feet, had fallen and bumped his forehead on the boards.

"There, there, never mind," said Rosy, lifting him in her arms ; "never mind."

And being so often told to "Never mind," Robbie concluded to obey, and, ceasing to scream, wound his chubby arms around her neck, and put up his lips for a kiss. But the noise had awakened the twins, and a chorus of cries arose from the cradle in which they lay, their mother having gone out on an errand to the store while they were sleeping. Rosy carried the two-year-old baby over to the cradle, and sitting down beside it, tried to quiet the three-months-old babies by rocking them. But it was of no use. The two tiny faces rubbed themselves fretfully over the pillows, the four aimless fists struck out blindly at imaginary foes, and the two little bodies rolled around and doubled themselves up in angry impatience. The harder Rosy rocked, the louder the babies screamed, until, in despair, she put Rob down upon the floor, and taking a baby on each knee, trotted them up and down with all her might.

But Rob did not approve of this position of affairs. He considered Rosy's lap his especial property, and, resenting his dethronement, he seized each baby by the frock, and, dragging upon them with his whole strength, cried out, "Down, bad baby! down!"

"Don't do so, Rob!" exclaimed Rosy, hardly able to hold the children back. "You don't want to sit on Rosy's lap. You're a man."

Robbie had released his grasp at her loud exclamation, and now standing before her with his hands clasped behind his back, he tried to look defiance. But it would not do. He could not bear to see those new babies usurping his place; his lip began to quiver, two big tears rolled slowly down his face, and, angrily sobbing out, "Aint a man, aint a man a bit," the little fellow flung himself upon the floor, crying bitterly.

Rosy could not stand that. Rob had always been her special pet, and it almost broke her heart to see how grieved he was. Down went the three-months-old into the cradle again, and Rosy threw herself down beside him.

"No, you aint a man. There, now, come to your own nurse, little boy. You're nothing but my own baby."

But Robbie considered himself aggrieved, and would not relent at first. Finally, however, her coaxing, aided by one of Miss Raymond's cakes, prevailed; and when Mrs. Conroy returned she found Rosy seated on the floor, with Rob on her lap, while the twins lay in the cradle contentedly sucking their fists.

"Oh, mother," cried Rosy, springing up to meet her, "Miss Raymond is going to send me to a public school, and she is going to give me shoes and clothes, and she is coming to see you to-morrow to tell you all about it!" and she danced about in her delight, until Rob shouted with glee.

"What do you mean at all, at all, Rosy? Stand quiet, and tell me what it is. Is it to the Ward-school you mean?"

"Yes; and Miss Raymond will see to my clothes, and I'll learn to be a teacher, and I'll take care of you and father and the twins and Rob."

"Softly, then, softly!" said her mother, laughing at her excitement. "Miss Raymond's a fine lady, so she is; and it's right thankful I am to her. But you'll have to stick close to your books then, Rosy."

"Yes, I know; but I can study real hard, mother. Oh, won't we have a gay time when I'm a teacher, Robbie?"

It had been the dream of the child's life to become a teacher, that she might help her blind father and careworn mother; and this new hope, that her great desire was to be granted, filled her heart with joy.

"Isn't father late to-night?" she said, after a short silence. She wanted to tell him of this great delight.

"He is that, and I'm getting a bit worried for him. Run you down the alley, Rosy, and see if he is coming."

Rosy went out, but before she reached the entrance to the alley she heard her father's cautious, slow step.

"Is that you, father?" she said, for it was too dark to see him.

"It's meself," said he.

"What's kept you so late?" asked the child, taking the cord by which he held his dog out of his hand, and leading him herself on through the darkness.

"'Twas the dog. He's sick, I'm thinkin', for he acts very queer. A good part of the forenoon he wouldn't walk at all, and I thought he'd scarce get me home, he seemed that weak in the legs."

"Why, Spot, are you sick, old fellow?" said Rosy, turning back to look at him. "Poor Spot!"

The dog, who was walking slowly along behind them, wagged his tail in answer to her voice, and then lay down wearily upon the stones.

"Come, Spot. Come get your supper, old dog," said Rosy; but he did not move.

So, after she had guided her father into the house, she went back. But coaxing and petting were all in vain. There he lay; he had brought his master safely home, and now that his work was done his strength had utterly failed. The tears sprang into Rosy's eyes as she looked pityingly at him while he lay panting for breath. He was a rough, coarse-looking dog, but he carried a faithful

heart under his coat of stiff yellow hair, and she loved him dearly. She could not bear to leave him on the cold stones, and putting her arms around him, she exerted all her strength, and, lifting him as best she could, staggered up the steps and bore him safely into the house.

"There, dear Spot," she said, "lie down by the stove and get warm."

And little Rob crept up to where he lay to pat his head and fondle him tenderly.

"Did you sell anything the day, Patrick?" asked the mother, as they sat around the table eating their supper of bread, with tea for the father and mother, and molasses for the children.

"No," said the man, sadly. "Nothing but a box of matches. It's been a sore day for me. So cold and bleak, and the dog ailing; me selling never a ha'porth but the bit of a box, and the rent so near due."

The mother sighed, and Rosy thought again of that good time coming when the rent should no longer be a burden to her blind father, when she should be the one to bear all the burdens, and to care for and help them all. She had told him of her happiness, but he had been so worried and distressed by his unsuccessful day's work that he had not paid any heed to her story.

After supper she put the little ones to bed, while her mother rocked the babies, one in the cradle, the other on her knee; and then she crept in beside Rob, and, wrapping her arms around him, asked God to help her to study hard, and to make her able to help her father and mother.

Outside, in the front room, Patrick Conroy and his wife sat together, talking hopelessly of the dark future; of their eldest boy, Will, who idled about day after day, refusing to work, and coming home only to eat and sleep; of the great loss which they should suffer if their sick dog should die; of the coming winter, which promised to be so severe; and of all the hundred cares and troubles which beset a

poor man with a family of young children ; while within lay the child, her heart in a flutter of joy and happiness, looking forward to that same future which to her imagination seemed so bright and joyous.

CHAPTER III.

A USELESS PLEA.

Rosy had been sound asleep, dreaming of her new school, when she was suddenly awakened by a sharp cry. She started up hastily, thinking at first that Robbie had called out ; but the little fellow lay quietly beside her. As she raised her head to listen, she heard a low, moaning sound coming from the outer room, and, softly creeping from her bed, she went to see what was the matter. Her heart was beating very fast, for in her pleasant dreams she had forgotten Spot, and she feared that the cry of pain had come from her father or mother. But when she glided softly through the door of the closet in which she slept, she found only the dog awake in the larger room. Her parents were sleeping heavily after their day's work, while Will lay curled up in a corner in a sound slumber.

But there was one pair of eyes which greeted her as she stole across the floor, and poor Spot's tail wagged feebly as she approached him. He lay stretched out before the stove, with his head thrown back, moaning piteously.

"Poor dog !" said Rosy, sitting down upon the floor beside him. "Dear old Spot !"

He looked up wistfully into her face, and, as she sat and stroked his head, his moans ceased, and at last he grew so quiet that Rosy crept back to her bed once more. But she no longer dreamed happy dreams. Spot's groans and cries were woven into all her thoughts ; and she was tossing

restlessly, muttering and sobbing, when her mother came to wake her in the morning.

"What is it, Rosy?" said Mrs. Conroy, putting back the tumbled hair from the child's face. "What makes you fret?"

"I don't know, only I had bad dreams. I thought Spot was dead."

"No, he's not dead, but he's far gone with the wake-ness. You can hear the laments of him all over the house, he cries that sore. Come, get you dressed and run in to Mrs. O'Brien's. She's very knowledgable on dogs, and maybe she can tell me what I'd best do for him. Hist, Rosy, be quiet like, or you'll waken the boy."

Robbie's hands had grasped her sleeve. Half-awakened by their voices he had roused himself enough to say, "Stay to Robbie," and then sank back into sleep, but holding her fast the while. Mrs. Conroy gently unclasped the tiny fingers, and Rosy proceeded to make herself ready to go for Mrs. O'Brien. When she came out into the front room she found her mother bending anxiously over the dog.

"I'm thinking you'll have to go out with the father the day, Rosy," said she.

"O mother! Miss Raymond is coming to-day!"

"Ah, child, I'm afeard she'll come for nought. If the dog dies, as I fear me he will, for he's took very bad, you'll have to lead the father."

Rosy stood still in silent dismay. If she must take her father out on his daily rounds, all her dearly-cherished plans and hopes must be given up. It seemed too hard a thing to think of.

"Oh, mother," she said, "I *must* go to school, else I'll never learn to be a teacher. Don't make me go with father;" and her eyes, brimming with tears, were lifted pleadingly to her mother's face.

"And would I ask it from you if I could help it, Rosy?"

Sure and it's been the hope of me life that you should get larnin', but what 'll we do if the father don't sell nothing? And how can he go his lone?"

"But Will might take him, mother!"

"If he would, he might; but he's that contrairy and that set in his ways that I'm afeard he'll not go for our asking. But if you like you could try, Rosy dear."

All the while that she was setting the table for breakfast, dressing the two smaller children and tending the babies, while her mother cut the bread and made the tea, Rosy was trying to make up her mind as to the most successful way of coaxing Will. He had been an unkind, cross brother to her, and she was somewhat afraid of him; but it was such a hard trial to give up the new hope which had arisen in her heart that she was willing to brave the chance of a sharp refusal. She could not decide on the way to approach the subject, and breakfast was over before she had summoned courage to speak to him. He was leaving the room, when, feeling that this was her last chance, she stopped him.

"Will, can't you go out with father, to-day?"

"Go out with him? What, pilot him about the streets with his basket of traps? I guess I won't. Go with him yourself!"

"But, Will, I can't go every day. If Spot dies somebody must go with father always; and if you won't, I'll have to give up my school."

"Who cares if you do? School aint no good."

"Yes, it is. And Miss Raymond is going to take me to a public school, where I can learn to be a teacher; and, oh, Will, I can't bear to give it up! Do, please, go."

She had crept up very close to him, her flushed cheeks and quivering lips adding their entreaty to her words; but the boy's heart was very hard, and when she laid an eager hand upon his coat-sleeve in her earnestness, he flung it off, saying roughly, "Don't give it up then. Let him get

along the best way he can. I aint going about the streets playing dog to a blind man."

It was a hopeless case, and poor Rosy felt it so.

"Oh, you bad, bad boy!" she cried out, passionately, and, as she spoke, she struck him on the arm.

He started forward to return the blow, and Rosy might have suffered a severe punishment for her fault if her mother had not stepped between her and his angry hand.

"Don't lift a finger to her!" said Mrs. Conroy, pushing Will aside hastily. "She says true, you are a bad boy, and a shame to the mother what reared you, to speak in such fashion of your own father because the Lord's afflicted him. Go you out this minute, and don't you dare to raise your hand to Rosy!"

With a hard laugh the boy turned away, while his mother tried to soothe and comfort the sobbing child.

The father had been out during this scene, and now, hearing his returning step, Rosy lifted her face from her mother's breast and tried to choke back her tears.

"There, then, darlin'," said Mrs. Conroy, cheerily. "Don't fret no more. Maybe Spot 'll be a deal easier the night when you come home. Keep up a good heart, Rosy."

CHAPTER IV.

REPENTANCE.

"Come, little woman," said her father, as he entered the room, "it is high time we were off. You must take care of the blind man to-day."

If there were in the child's heart any lingering reluctance to yield her own will, her father's allusion to himself as the "blind man" scattered it at once. She sprang up quickly,

and slipping her hand into his, said, "I'm ready, father. I'll be a first-rate leader for you."

So they went out together; the father, with his basket filled with papers of pins, cord, &c., hanging on his arm, holding by the hand his little child, whose bright eyes were to be a light in his darkness through all the weary march of the long day.

But although Rosy went with a willing heart to her task, she was very quiet and subdued, walking by his side as gravely as a woman. Once before she had led him out on his daily round, but then she had skipped along laughing and talking merrily, or singing snatches of sweet songs and hymns, until her joyousness had so infected him that his day's labour seemed only a pastime. But to-day she was very still, scarcely speaking except when he addressed her. He did not wonder at that, however, for his own heart was sad as he thought of his faithful guide and companion lying before the stove at home, probably dying, and he knew that Rosy loved the old dog dearly.

But while Rosy thought sorrowfully of Spot, there was another sore trouble weighing upon her mind, and making her usually bright face so solemn. If the pain which she felt had been only in her heart, she might have forgotten her own grief in that of her father, and have tried to cheer and comfort him; but she had something worse to bear. Her conscience was hard at work. The angry words which she had spoken to Will, the blow which she had given him, rested heavily upon it, and it could not rest. In vain she told herself that Will was a cruel, unkind boy, and that it was very wicked for him to speak as he had done of his blind father. That was all true; but she felt that it made her sin none the less. She had no right to strike him because he was wicked; and she knew full well, hard as she tried to excuse herself, that it was passion, and nothing else, which had led her to speak and act as she *had done*.







THE YOUNG MAN AND THE OLD MAN.



And then another thought came up to add to her sorrow. She had been very much in earnest when she told Miss Raymond that she was trying to be a Christian. She had tried faithfully to follow the dear Saviour, whom she truly loved, and she had begun to hope that she might yet lead Will to Him. Disobedient as he was to his parents, roughly as he often spoke to the younger children, he had certainly been somewhat more gentle with her of late, and she had thought that if she bore patiently with his faults she might, by God's help, induce him to live a better life. She had made a great effort; many and many a time she had resolutely kept back the sharp retort which rose to her lips, and struggled against the anger which his conduct roused within her; she had fought hard, and she had hoped that the victory was not far off. But now, all was lost. After all her self-restraint and patience she had quarrelled with him, and had even struck the first blow. She knew that the very fact of her long forbearance only made this outbreak stand out in bolder contrast, and she felt sure that any new effort she might make to win him to a Christian life would be met by some allusion to her own misconduct: for Will knew that Rosy had chosen the Saviour for her Master, and was trying to follow Him. The little heart grew more troubled, and the young face more grave, as she walked on, thinking of all this.

By-and-by her restless conscience set a new thought before her, with very disagreeable vividness. She felt that she ought to ask her brother's pardon. That was a hard thing to do. He had been so unkind; it was his fault that the quarrel had arisen; it seemed as if she could not do it. No; she would be gentle and pleasant when she saw him again, but she would not ask his forgiveness. But conscience is a severe taskmaster when it has a certain work to do in a tender heart; and Rosy's would not content itself with such a half-way measure as that, and it stung her so sharply that it brought the tears to her eyes,

and made her lip quiver with distress. Her pride would not let her yield, even while she knew that she could not be at peace until she did so.

It was a hard-fought battle, and lasted through all the morning, but finally poor Rosy's pride was vanquished, and with an earnest but silent prayer for strength she resolved to do even this for her Master.

Her mind once made up, her heart grew lighter. She had been so engrossed with her own painful thoughts, that she had scarcely noticed her father. She had led him to the different places to which he directed her, and stood beside him while he offered his wares for sale; but she had paid no attention to what passed around her, farther than that. Now, as she looked up at him, she saw that his face was very sad, and that his step was slow and weary.

"How much have you sold, father?" she asked him.

"Only eight cents' worth, all this long day."

Rosy started. She knew that when they left home a small half-loaf of bread was all the food that remained in the house. That must have been eaten by this time, and they had not yet made enough to buy another loaf.

"Oh, we must get ten cents, at least," she said; and taking some cards of hooks and eyes from the basket, she held them out to the passers-by, begging them to purchase something of her.

Pressing forward in her eagerness to gain enough to feed the hungry children at home, she left her father standing on the corner, and turned into the next street.

"Please, sir, buy some cards," she said to a gentleman who passed her.

He put a penny into her hand, and went on.

Another and another hurried on unheeding, and Rosy was on the point of turning back in despair, when a lady approached. Many had passed as she stood there, but *something* in the look of this new-comer gave the child confidence.

"Please, ma'am ——" she said, drawing nearer to her.

"I have nothing for you," said the lady.

"I don't want to beg, ma'am," said Rosy, keeping close by her side; "but I do want to sell these cards so very bad."

"Oh, that is it, is it? Well, give me one."

"Four cents they are, ma'am."

The lady handed her ten cents.

"Could you wait one minute while I run to my father for the change? He is standing on the next corner."

"No, never mind. You may keep it."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am. It'll buy us bread for supper." And Rosy ran back to her father with the load lifted from her heart.

It was nearly dusk, and they had a long walk before them; so they turned toward home, offering their little articles to all whom they met on the way; but no one bought. The eighteen cents was the whole profit of the day's labour.

CHAPTER V.

A BITTER GRIEF.

ROSY was disappointed when they reached home to find that Will was not there. She had resolved to tell him at once how sorry she was that she had been so passionate in the morning, and she wanted to relieve her burdened conscience without delay. But the instant that her eye fell on Spot her whole heart turned to him, and she forgot Will and all her trouble on his account as she knelt down beside the dog.

He was lying where she had left him in the morning, gasping convulsively for breath, but when he heard the

step of his master and his little friend he opened his eyes; and as Rosy threw herself upon the floor beside him he staggered to his feet, and sank down again with his head upon her lap.

"Mother, he's dying," said Rosy, for even her unpractised sight noticed the glaze on the soft eyes as they looked wistfully into her face.

"Don't let him die, mother; can't you help him?"

"And wouldn't I give him the help if I had it, then?" said the mother. "He's beyond me entirely, so he is, poor thing."

The blind man came with his slow step across the room, and bending down, laid his hand upon the head of his faithful companion.

"Good Spot!" he said, in a quivering voice. "It's a true friend you've been to me. But we'll never tramp the streets together again, old boy—never."

The dog tried to lick the caressing hand, and then his eyes raised themselves again to Rosy's face with a look which seemed to speak almost in living words, so full of love and longing was it.

And the child sat gazing at him with flushed cheeks and tearless eyes. There was a great grief tugging at her heart-strings. It was not only that her dog, the friend of her babyhood, who had grown up with her, loved almost as dearly as her sisters and brothers, lay dying, but all her hopes and wishes were dying with him,—the hopes which she had cherished for years, and which last night had seemed so near their fulfilment. It seemed to her as if the world had suddenly grown cold and chill, and God and heaven were far, far away; and wearied with her day's toil, disheartened by ill-success, she felt as if Spot's death would be the one drop which was needed to fill the full cup to overflowing.

She had not long to wait for that last drop of sorrow. The yearning look in those glazing eyes grew more intense;

suddenly the dog sprung to his feet, and laid his nose upon her neck, pressing close to her as if to seek protection from the icy hand which grasped his heart. Rosy clasped her arms around him, hiding her face against his head, and with a strong, hard shudder, old Spot drew his last breath.

It was a sad group upon which his dying eyes closed. The blind man with his sightless eyes turned away, as if even his blindness could not shut out the mournful picture; the mother, with her apron thrown over her head, crying bitterly; Susy, leaning upon her father's knee, turning away, like him, from the cruel sight; and Rob, with his hand on Rosy's shoulder, gazing in awe-struck, silent grief, at his playmate; while Rosy—Spot's favourite among them all—looked on with burning, dry eyes, clasping him tightly in her loving arms, as if she would hold him back from the death which was dragging him from her.

By-and-by Mrs. Conroy moved away from the sorrowful group, and began to make preparations for their simple supper.

"Come," she said, when it was ready; "come and eat a bit before we go to our beds."

But no one was hungry. Even little Robbie, whose chubby hands were generally only too eager to grasp at any thing eatable, turned away from the slice of bread that his mother offered him, sobbing out, "Robbie don't want bread; Robbie wants Spot to open his eyes."

The mother was putting away the almost untasted supper when Will came in.

"O Will," said Robbie, running toward him, "Spot won't look at his own boy!"

Will crossed the room to where Rosy sat, with the dog's head still pillowed on her lap.

"Is the brute dead?" he asked roughly.

She did not answer, but his mother said, "Speak softer, Will. Yes, he's dead, poor fellow!"

He walked away to the table without another word, and

took up the loaf of bread which still lay there ; but throwing it instantly down, said, "That bread is stale."

"We can't buy fresh bread," said Mrs. Conroy. "It makes more waste than this."

"I should think, when you give a fellow nothing but dry bread, it might as well be fresh," said he, sullenly.

Rosy looked up with flashing eyes. There were angry words on her lips, but the next moment she bent her head down again without speaking.

"You might have what you like to eat, if you chose, Will," said the father. "'Tis your own fault you live so poor. You ought to work and earn wages like an honest man."

"I aint going to work for nobody," said Will ; "so there's no use talking."

"You needn't tell us that," said Rosy, turning upon him suddenly. "We all know that though you're a big, strong fellow, you're just mean enough to steal your living from your poor blind father, rather than work for yourself!"

She was trembling with passion as she stood before him, with her eyes fixed on his sullen face.

Will looked at her for a moment with a sneering smile, and then moved away, saying, "This is your second fury to-day. You're getting mighty pious, aint you?"

The child's whole aspect changed instantly. Her up-raised hand fell slowly to her side, her eye lost its indignant flash, and, without answering a single word, she took Robbie by the hand and went away into the closet in which they slept ; and when she had undressed the boy, and laid him in the bed, she laid down beside him, and cried as if her heart would break. Her first impulse to resentment had been controlled, but the second had been stronger, and had overcome her before she had time to resist it ; and she had given Will an opportunity to sneer at her efforts to follow in the footsteps of her Master. Poor little child ! *those fast-flowing tears were very bitter.*

By-and-by, when she had cried herself into a more quiet state of feeling, she began to think what it was best for her to do. It was harder now than ever to ask Will's pardon, and yet she could not still that voice within which urged her to the task. For a long while she lay there thinking. All was still in the outer room, and she tried to persuade herself that Will was asleep, and would be angry if she waked him; and she tried to sleep, too. But it would not do. That small voice whispered, at first in low tones, then louder and louder, until at last, with a sudden resolution, she rose from the bed, knelt down for one moment to ask her Saviour for the help she needed to do His will, and then crept out into the front room. Will was sitting before the stove. He raised his head with a start when he heard the patter of her bare feet on the boards.

"What are you about? Go back to your bed!" he said, sharply.

"I will in a moment," she said, humbly. "We must talk softly, or we'll wake father and mother. I'm so sorry that I was cross and angry to-day. Will you forgive me?"

"Humph," said the boy, "that's all very well. You're mighty sorry now, but the next time you fly into a passion it'll be the same old story. You get into a tantrum, and hit or knock me as you like, and think that all you've got to do is to come crying, and say, 'Please forgive me,'" and he imitated the tremulous tones of her voice. "No, I won't forgive you! I don't believe in your kind of pious. Go off to bed!"

"O Will, please do," she said, beseechingly.

"I won't! There, do you hear what I say? Now go, or I'll make you."

He started up with a threatening gesture, and, frightened by his angry manner, she fled back into her closet.

CHAPTER VI.

ROSY A TRADESWOMAN.

THE sound of voices loud in dispute mixed itself with Rosy's morning dreams, and the noise of a heavy fall made her start up in her bed with sudden terror. At first she could not tell whether it had been all a dream or not, but the next moment her mother's voice called her in a quick, frightened tone ; and running into the front room, with her heart beating fast with fear, she found her father lying upon the floor, and her mother kneeling beside him, trying to raise him in her arms.

"Oh, mother!" cried Rosy, "is father dead, too?"

"No, child. The Lord be praised for sparing us that."

"No, Rosy, it's nothing very bad," said the father, cheerfully. "I'm thinking my ankle's got a sprain, or the likes of it," and he tried to lift himself to his feet. But the effort gave him such pain that he sank back with a groan.

"How did he happen to fall?" asked Rosy, as she gently wiped away the great drops which stood on his forehead.

"'Twas Will did it," said the mother. "Your father bade him bide at home the morn till it was time for him to go out with his wares ; but Will wouldn't hearken to it. He wouldn't do so much as to lead him to a good corner, so that you might go to your school ; and the father was sore angered. They got into high words, and when Will tried to pass the door, the father laid hold on him, and between them—I don't rightly know how it was—he fell over the step here, with his foot bent under him, Oh dear, what'll we do at all with the father laid by?"

"Never mind, mother dear," said Rosy, as Mrs. Conroy

took up the corner of her apron to wipe away the tears which were rolling slowly down her face. "You mustn't get discouraged."

"But, child, there's never a cent in the house, and your father may lie for weeks afore he can put his foot to the ground; and there's six hungry mouths to feed."

"We'll see and get something to fill them, mother. Don't be afraid. Let me go out with father's basket to-day. Maybe I can sell a little."

"Dear heart!" said the mother, tenderly. "But I'd be afeard to have you go out your lone, Rosy."

"God won't let any harm happen me."

"No more He wouldn't, then, and you working for the father and mother and the little ones."

They had succeeded in lifting the blind man into a chair, and while Mrs. Conroy bound up the injured foot Rosy went back to Robbie, who was fretting and crying in the closet.

She had spoken cheerfully to her mother, for her warm, loving heart was full of pity for her; but she had said what she did because she wanted to console her, not because she felt the comfort in her own soul. She had said that God would watch over her, and yet she felt as if she could not find God that morning; and her whole heart was roused again, against the brother whose wickedness had made so much suffering for them all.

An hour later Rosy went out with her father's basket on her arm; for the children, hungry after the fast of the past evening, had eaten so heartily that but little was left for the mid-day meal.

If the many, many people who passed the corner of Fourteenth Street and Broadway, on that bright Saturday, could have looked into the heart of the child who stood there quietly offering for sale her papers of pins and cards of buttons, they would have paused and tried to do something toward lightening its load of care. But it

Rosy's basket had been filled with money that would have lifted but a part of the load from her spirit, for the heaviest weight resting there was a burden of angry, resentful feeling. Yesterday she had gone through a hard struggle with her conscience; but to-day she would not listen for a moment to its suggestions, and every time that it raised its voice, telling her that she ought to forgive her brother, she answered it angrily, saying that she had done all that she could: she had asked his pardon, and he had unkindly refused it, and she could not and would not forgive his cruelty to her blind father. So she stood there brooding over all the trouble that he had caused, until her whole soul was full of bitterness, and her usually bright face clouded and saddened.

It was growing late, and the crowd of people passing up and down began to thin somewhat, but still the child stood patiently holding out her cards. By-and-by a big boy turned the corner; he stopped beside her, and suddenly striking her basket with his elbow, upset it on the walk, and with a loud laugh ran off.

"Just like a boy!" said Rosy to herself, as she picked up the scattered articles. "All boys are horrid!"

A remorseful thought of Robbie, with his pretty prattle and sweet ways, came across her mind as she made that strong assertion; and the next moment she doubted again whether it was quite a fair condemnation, for a pleasant, hearty voice, said,—

"Hallo, Rosy, is this you? Where's your father?"

"He's home," said Rosy. "He's had a fall and lamed his foot."

"My! that's bad, aint it? But what's happened to your basket? Your things are all in a mess."

"I know it. A boy knocked it over."

"Did he do it o' purpose?"

"Yes. Wasn't it mean?"

"Mean! I wish I'd been here to catch him. I reckon

he wouldn't have wanted to see Ned Dolan very soon again. You look right tired. Sit down on my foot-block, and I'll try to sell some for you."

He placed the block upon its side on the pavement, and, seating her upon it, turned away with her basket in his hand.

"Buttons! buttons! Buy my nice buttons! Strong and good, and wash first-rate!" called Ned's clear voice.

And many turned to listen to it, there was such an honest, manly ring in it. Some did more than pause to listen; and when Ned pointed toward the child sitting close at hand, and told them that her father was blind and lame, and that she had stood there all day long trying to earn a little money to buy bread, he found that there were some generous hearts among his hearers, and the pennies, and other small pieces of money, fell quite plentifully into the basket. By-and-by he came back to where Rosy was sitting.

"I've got a heap of coppers," said he. "Let's count up and see how much you've made altogether."

She gave him the hoard which she had put carefully into the bosom of her dress, and he proceeded to count it.

"One dollar and eighteen cents. That's pretty good, aint it?"

"One dollar and eighteen cents!" repeated Rosy, in amazement. "Why, Ned, that can't be!"

"Yes, it can. You gave me thirty cents, and I got the rest. One old gent gave me a twenty-five, and a little chap gave me two tens when I told them that your father was blind; and the rest came from one and another, you know. Take it, it's yours."

"But, Ned, you ought to have part, because you sold the things."

"No, I oughtn't; and, besides, I didn't sell much—they mostly gave it. Come on. Let's start for home."

Rosy put the money carefully away, telling him over

and over again how much she thanked him; and they turned toward home, Ned carrying her basket as well as his own block.

"I say, Rosy," said the boy, after they had walked some distance, "there's somethin' ailin' you. What is it?"

"Oh, I don't know; only it seems as if every one was bad except father, and mother, and children, and you, Ned. You are good."

"Me good!" said the boy, bending eagerly forward. "Do you think that? Honest now, Rosy."

"Yes, I guess I do think so," said Rosy, so earnestly that Ned had no chance to doubt her.

"I've been trying for it," said he, thoughtfully. "I've been trying for it right hard, but I don't think it's come yet."

"You're real good to me, any way;" and Rosy drew closer to him, and slipped her hand through his arm.

"P'raps I am to you. But, Rosy, it's so mighty hard to be good when all the other fellows are bad."

"Yes, Ned, it's very hard. Some days are so different from other days, too. Now sometimes I feel as if I loved God so much that I'd do anything He wants; and then other days He seems far away from me, and everything goes wrong, and I feel cross and wicked all the time. Do you feel that way?"

"Yes; and that's why I think I can't be good yet. Aint it queer, Rosy? I wonder what makes it."

"I don't know," she said; "but I wish things were different."

"So do I; but I aint a-goin' to give over trying, that's sure," said Ned. "Are you, Rosy?"

"No," said Rosy, as she turned into the court which led to her home; but there was no heartiness in her tone.

The little girl was in danger that night. She had allowed a spirit of unforgiving anger to take possession of

her heart, and it was blinding her to all that was fair and sweet in her life, and opening her eyes to all that was dark and dreary.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARMOUR BUCKLED ON.

MISS RAYMOND'S class in Sunday-school was usually very quiet and attentive, her only difficulty being Rosy Conroy's irresistible inclination to laugh at any little circumstance which struck her as amusing. Miss Raymond had no desire to repress the child's love of mirth, but the fun and merriment which seemed always bubbling up within her sometimes broke out in a bright sparkle, as if it could not be restrained, even in the midst of the lessons for the day.

For some weeks past, however, Rosy had been very attentive, and her teacher had not found it necessary to check her laughter; but on the Sabbath following the day of her father's accident she was more than quiet. Her usually eager greeting was dull and listless, and during the singing of the hymns, in which she generally joined with such keen pleasure, she sat looking silently down upon her book; and all through the lesson her manner was the same.

She was about to leave the class when the school was dismissed, but Miss Raymond laid her hand upon her shoulder, and said, "Can you wait one moment, Rosy? I want to speak to you."

"What troubles you to-day?" she asked, drawing her toward her when the other girls had left the seat. "I never saw you look so grave before."

Rosy's tears lay as near the surface as her smiles, and the gentle voice and words brought them into her eyes at once.

"I don't know," she said, "unless it's because every one is ugly and wicked."

Miss Raymond moved so as to shield her from observation, then she said,—

"What makes you think that everybody is ugly and wicked, Rosy?"

"Oh, a great many things. Will behaves shamefully. He won't work, and he's bad to father. Yesterday he was quarrelling with him, and somehow father fell, and he's sprained his foot. He's a dreadful boy!"

"And do you try to do him all the good you can?"

"He won't let me do him any good! I've tried and tried, and it aint any use. I'm not going to try any more!"

"We won't talk about that just now," said Miss Raymond. "I think that my little Rosy wants comforting, and I had rather do that. Now try to tell me just how you feel, and let us see if I can help you."

Rosy's manner had been angry and excited when speaking of Will, but it changed instantly.

"I can't tell how I feel," she said, looking up at her teacher with her face all trembling with emotion; "but I'm afraid I don't love my Saviour, after all."

"What makes you think so, Rosy? You told me only a day or two ago that you did love Him."

"I know I did, and I thought so then; but everything seems different now. Sometimes I felt as if He was close by, and I was so glad to think He was so near me; but now He seems so far, so very far away: and, oh, I do feel so lonely!" and she hid her face against Miss Raymond's arm, sobbing bitterly.

"Did you say your prayers this morning, Rosy?"

"Yes, but it didn't do a bit of good."

"Did you say, 'Our Father which art in heaven?'"

"Yes, ma'am, I always say that."

"Did you think of any one whom you needed to for-

give, when you said, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors?'"

Rosy looked as if she did not quite comprehend; but all at once the full meaning of the question flashed across her mind.

"Oh, Miss Raymond!" she said, hastily, "I never thought of all that meant before."

"I was afraid that you had not, Rosy. That is a very solemn petition. This morning you asked God to forgive your sins as you forgive the sins of others. Do you want Him to answer that prayer; to forgive you as you forgive your brother?"

"No, no! I never meant that. Indeed, I didn't!"

"I don't suppose you did, dear. But we must never ask God to do anything for us unless we fully mean all that we say. Now let us talk about your trouble. Here is a child who has a loving father and mother, three dear little sisters, and one of the sweetest little brothers ever seen; yet this same child tells me that every one is ugly and wicked. Because she has one bad brother, she turns away from the precious thought of all the other dear friends whom God has given her, and nurses up her feelings of anger and impatience until she almost forgets that there is any sunshine at all in the world. This is very sinful, Rosy. You are wronging your dear ones at home; you are wronging me; and, worse than all, you are wronging God."

Poor Rosy felt as if this were laying a very heavy weight of blame upon her shoulders; but the rebuking voice was gentle, and the hand which held hers was very tender in its touch.

"I couldn't help it," she said, piteously. "I did try to be good to him when he was bad to me. I did forgive him when he was cross about the school and wouldn't let me go, though I wanted to so bad; and I begged his pardon for being naughty to him. But when he behaves

so to father and mother I can't bear it. They're so good to him. Mother always keeps a big bit of bread for him, never mind how pinched we are; and father scarcely ever scolds him. I can't be forgiving and forgiving all the time, and he never a bit the better for it."

"Suppose that God said He could not be forgiving and forgiving all the time, where would my Rosy be?"

The child was silent, and Miss Raymond went on. "The reason that you feel so lonely, Rosy,—so far away from God,—is, that you are keeping in your heart feelings that He does not love. Gentle Jesus cannot stay in a heart that is full of anger and bitterness. They crowd Him out, and He turns sadly away, thinking that His little lamb is wandering away from Him. Does this little lamb mean to let Him go from her, and leave her to lose herself in the wilderness; or, does she mean to drive these wicked feelings out of her heart and take Him in again, to be her joy and comfort?"

"I know that it is very difficult," she continued, after pausing a moment for an answer, "very difficult, indeed, to forgive any one who abuses those we love; but Jesus Christ came to die for those who had rebelled against His Father, and cannot you be patient with one who sins against your father? It grieves the blessed Saviour to see, that after He has forgiven you so much you are so angry with your brother. You do not want to grieve Him, do you, Rosy?"

"No, I don't! indeed I don't! But, Miss Raymond, it's so hard!"

"I know it is, my darling, I know it is; but you must go to Jesus for the strength you need for such a task. A feeble little girl like you could never carry such a weight alone, but there is One who will carry it for you. When you find that anything is too hard for you, take it to the Lord Jesus, and He will make it easy for His little child. He knew just how weak and tempted you were, when He

told you to forgive even as you wanted to be forgiven ; He saw too that you were not strong enough to do it alone ; but then He knew that He was able to help you, and that, weak as you were, you could do all things through Him. Do you not believe that, Rosy ? ”

“ Yes ; but then, Miss Raymond, it’s so much easier to feel it when I’m sitting here by you, while you tell me all about it. When I go home and see how unhappy mother looks, and see poor father sitting with his foot up on a chair, and his face so troubled and anxious, it is very different. Then all the good feelings go away, and I get so vexed at Will, I don’t know what to do. If I could only stay in Sunday-school with you all the time, I’m sure I’d be a better girl.”

“ But your Master does not want you to do that, Rosy. He wants you to go out into the world and work for Him. He does not mean that you shall be a drone in this busy hive ; He has work for His little servant to do. Suppose that one of our soldiers should fall out of the ranks as the army was marching to battle, and, sitting down in some pleasant, sunny spot, should say, ‘ I love my country very much, so I mean to sit quietly here, and just think how grand she is, and how much I love to serve her ; ’ what sort of a soldier would that be ? Wouldn’t he show his love more by standing up face to face with the enemies of his country, and fighting for her with all his strength and might ? Of course he would ; and so will my Rosy show her love for her Master by fighting in the ranks of His army. We want to sit down sometimes in the sunny nook to think of Him, but it must be after the battle is fought. Isn’t that so, little soldier ? ”

“ I guess it is,” said Rosy, with sudden animation. “ It’s lazy to rest before you work, isn’t it ? I’m real glad I told it all to you, Miss Raymond. I feel so much better.”

“ Can you forgive Will now, Rosy ? ”

"I'll try very hard," she said, rather tremulously. "And God will forgive me, won't He?"

"Yes, dear. And if you try to be kind to your brother, all these angry, wicked feelings which have shut the door of your heart against the dear Saviour will pass away, and Jesus will come in again to make it glad."

"Then I'll be so happy again, won't I? I am real sorry I said I wasn't going to try to do Will good any more. I will try again as much as ever I can. If I don't do what I can for him, that won't be forgiving like I want God to forgive me,—will it?"

"No, it would not. Is Will at home now, Rosy?"

"No, ma'am. He hasn't been at home since he pushed father down. I suppose he's afraid to come back."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No, ma'am; mother tried to find out this morning, but she couldn't. I—I——" Rosy's face crimsoned as she hesitated.

"Could you have found him if you would, Rosy?"

"Maybe some of the boys could have told me if I had asked, but—but—O Miss Raymond, I felt as if I couldn't bear to see him this morning. But that is all gone now," she continued, in a steadier tone. "I'll try this afternoon to find him; and if I do, I'll see and win him home. I truly will."

"I know you will," said Miss Raymond. "I see that the little soldier has buckled on her armour, and means to fight her battles bravely. But she must not forget to keep close to her Captain."

"No, I won't forget," said Rosy, thoughtfully. "I don't think I could let him go again, I've been so miserable without him."

And, with her young heart full to overflowing with its new-found peace and joy, the child went out on her mission.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOE TURNER'S.

"Now, Susy, we must run along as fast as we can," said Rosy, to her little sister, who had been waiting patiently for her during her long conversation with Miss Raymond; "mother will wonder what has become of us. Isn't it a beautiful afternoon? It makes one feel so bright and nice."

"Why, Rosy," said Susy, looking at her in amazement, "when we were coming to school I said it was nice, and you said 'I don't think so: it's horrid cold!'"

"Did I?" said Rosy, laughing merrily. "I don't think it is horrid now, anyway. Maybe I've got warmed up. I feel real good. Let's skip."

So they twined their arms around one another, and away they went down the street with that peculiar, dancing motion, which always tells us that a happy heart wings the light-springing foot. The little feet never "skip" when the heart is sad.

"There's Ned," said Rosy, as they approached the entrance to the court, and saw Ned Dolan standing near it; "he's just the one I want."

"Ned,"—motioning him away from the knot of boys with whom he was talking—"I'd like to speak to you."

"What is it?" said he, sauntering slowly toward her.

"Do you know where Will is?"

"No; but I guess I could hunt him up. I saw him this morning down at Joe Turner's."

"With that bad boy? Why, he's a thief, aint he?"

"Yes. I tried to make Will come home, but he said

your father was so angered at him that he wouldn't let him in."

"Don't you think maybe he'd come if I went after him?"

"You! Why it's away across town, 'most down to the river; and an awful bad place, too. You couldn't go."

"Wouldn't you go with me, and take care of me, Ned?" She came closer, and looked up at him coaxingly. "I think I could win him back; and I'm so afraid he'll get into trouble there."

"I shouldn't think you'd want him back. He's ugly enough to you when he's here. I'd let him bide away."

"Oh, no, Ned, that isn't right! That isn't the way we want God to do to us when we do wrong. Won't you take me?"

"'Course I will, if you're set on goin'. But supposin' he aint there? He may be off t'other end of the city by this time."

"Then we'll be off to the other end, too," said Rosy, laughing. "We'll be as smart as he is. We'll find him, and bring him safe home."

"Come along, then. I guess I can travel as far as you can. Seems to me you've brightened up considerable since last night. You didn't look much like laughin' then."

"Shall I tell you the reason, Ned? Don't you know you said last night that you wasn't going to give up trying to be good? I'm afraid I had given up trying just then; and that was why I felt so miserable. But I've begun again; and the first thing is to find Will, and to be kind to him."

"I see," said Ned, thoughtfully. "Come on. I'm ready for that job."

"Wait one minute, till I tell mother;" and away she ran.

"How late you are, Rosy!" said Mrs. Conroy, as the child sprang into the room, and pausing for one instant to

snatch up Rob, and for another to kiss her father, finally reached her mother's side. "What kept you?"

"I was talking to Miss Raymond," said Rosy.

"And she's sent you home bright and cheery again, eh? Sure and I thought some fairy'd been and changed my laughing Rosy for a sad-faced girl! But the light's come back to your eye again, darlint, so it has;" and the mother took the smiling face between her hands and kissed it fondly.

"The light isn't in your eyes, mother," said Rosy, as she noticed her troubled look. "You're tired with the twins and Rob."

"I'm tired with a heavier load than either the twins or my little man, dear. It's Will that's weighing on me. Two days and a night he's been away; and if he bides from me another night, and me not knowing where he is, alive or dead, I'll just go distracted. If I could only walk good, I'd leave the house and the children with you and the father, and go after him till I found him. But I fail so soon at the walking, it aint no use to try."

"Let me go, mother. I'll bring home home."

"No, child, he's too rough with you. If you went nigh him he'd be just like to fetch you a blow. Where would you go to find him?"

"Ned Dolan will help me. Let me go, mother dear, and if I stay late don't you be worried, because he'll be with me. We'll coax Will home, I guess."

"You blessed little child!" said the mother, and, wrapping her up warmly as their scanty wardrobe would allow, she sent her on her way.

"No, Rosy, no!" protested Rob, as he saw her about to leave him again; "stay to your boy."

"I'll be back soon, Rob. I'm going for Will," said Rosy, pausing at the door.

"Don't want Will—bad Will!" replied Robbie, with a trembling quaver in his voice.

"Maybe he'll be good when he comes home again. Robbie must pet him and love him."

But he shook his head at that idea, and the difficulty of Rosy's task was almost doubled by hearing him cry out, with a heart-broken sob, as she closed the door, "Bad, bad Rosy, leave Rob!"

At first it seemed as if she must go back—as if it were too hard to grieve her dear little Robbie for Will's sake; but the next moment she had conquered herself, and, running quickly up the alley, she joined Ned Dolan.

"Joe Turner's" was by no means a safe or pleasant place for any child to visit, as Rosy well knew; but, with Ned's strong arm to defend her, she did not much fear, and she ran along beside him, exerting herself to keep pace with his long strides, and chatting as gaily as if she were out on a holiday jaunt. Even when they drew near the river, and the cold November wind swept up the street with a sharp, stinging whistle, she only drew her shawl closer around her, and, without a word of complaint, struggled on.

By-and-by they reached the house. It had once been a storehouse, but for years it had been slowly falling to ruin, and was now inhabited by a set of idle, half-grown boys, who, having no other home, took what shelter its broken roof and trembling walls could give. Joe Turner was its oldest inmate, and the house went, among these boys, by his name. It looked dreary and desolate enough as they approached it, with the twilight falling darkly around it, and the wind dashing the crazy shutters back and forth; while the open door swung slowly to and fro with a dismal, creaking noise.

"Oh, Ned! isn't it a dreadful place?" said Rosy, clinging close to him.

"Yes, it is pretty lonesome of a dark night. Come, inside, while I see if he's here."

He had to lift her up and set her within the door, for

the wooden steps which led to the entrance had long since disappeared; and when he sprang up beside her and took her hand to lead her on, Rosy was forced to commit herself entirely to his guidance, it was so dark.

"Wait a minute, and I'll strike a light," said Ned. "There's a trap-door somewhere between the stairs and the door, and it wouldn't be very gay to walk down there."

He took a box of matches from his pocket and lighted one. A flight of stairs, with the banisters broken down, and with huge rat-holes in almost every step, rose directly before them; the trap-door of which Ned had spoken lying open, close beside.

"It's good I struck the match, wasn't it?" said he. "I guess he's gone off, or we'd hear 'em. I'll call. Hallo, there, Joe!"

There was no answer.

"Will Conroy!"

"You wait here while I run up; I'm afraid to let you on these stairs."

He sprang away as he spoke, and Rosy was left alone in that dreary place, with the open trap-door on one side, and on the other all the grim shadows which she had seen as the flickering light of the match fell around her for a moment; while the rats rushed about in every direction, quite undismayed by her presence. She tried hard to be brave, and began to sing a hymn to keep up her courage; but her voice trembled so that she could scarcely pronounce the words, and when a rat suddenly ran across the floor behind her, with a sharp squeal, she could bear it no longer, and a cry of terror took the place of the last note of her tremulous hymn. Ned was beside her in a moment.

"What's the matter?" he asked, anxiously. "Did somebody scare you?"

"Oh, the rats, and the big hole in the floor, and—and—oh, I'm sorry, Ned, but I was so frightened! I did try not to scream," sobbed Rosy.

"Poor little thing! It's such a lonesome place," said Ned, kindly. "Let's go out."

"But Will?" said Rosy, trying to speak very steadily, but failing entirely in the effort.

"Oh, you'll have to give it up, Rosy! He's off to John Hall's, away up to Fifty-seventh Street. I found one of the fellows upstairs, asleep. I woke him up, and he says that Will has gone there for the night."

"But, Ned, isn't it a bad place?"

"I should think it was."

"Let's go coax him out, Ned."

The boy looked at her in amazed silence. "Why, child, it's a'most out to Central Park!" he said, at length.

"I know it. Can't you walk so far?"

"Yes, I can; but you can't."

"Yes, I can; try me, Ned."

"But I tell you you couldn't do it, Rosy."

"And I tell you I will do it," said the child, resolutely. "I can walk a great deal. I'll be real good if you'll take me, Ned. I won't get frightened again. Not if I can help it," she added, a little afraid of being put to the test.

He looked down at the eager, upraised face, and could scarcely resist its pleading, but he did not think it possible for her to accomplish the task after having walked so far already.

"I'm afraid Mother Conroy would be mad at me if I took you so far, Rosy," said he.

"No, she wouldn't. You don't know how worried she is for Will. She'll break her heart if I go home and tell her I left him in that place. Come; please, come."

She took his hand in both her own, trying to drag him on with her, and Ned yielded.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOST BROTHER.

As they walked on, Ned drew away his hand from the close grasp in which Rosy held it, and thrusting it into his pocket brought out some pennies. An examination into the other pockets produced some more. He counted them over, seven in all. He counted again, felt in his pockets again, but no searching or counting increased the store; seven cents was his whole capital. Soon they reached a street, through which a line of cars passed, and Ned hailed one.

"What are you going to do?" asked Rosy, in surprise.

"Ride," was the reply.

"But how shall we pay?"

He was lifting her on the platform as she spoke. The conductor heard her. He looked suspiciously at Ned, and, following him into the car, asked him for his fare almost before he had taken his seat.

"Will you let us ride for seven cents," asked the boy, holding out his pennies. "I aint got no more, and the little girl is nigh done up."

"Where are you going?" asked the conductor.

"To Fifty-seventh Street. I know it's pretty much of an ask, but she looks so mighty tired."

The man thought she did look "mighty tired" as he glanced at the pale, weary little face. "Does she live up there?" he asked.

"No. She's goin' up to fetch her brother. He is in a place there where he's no business to be, and she wants to get him home. She lives in Wooster Street."

The conductor was on the point of taking the money,

when Rosy said, "I've got one penny, Ned. Mother gave it to me last night," and she drew it out of her pocket. "Only I meant to put it into the missionary-box at Sunday-school. They didn't bring the box round to-day, but oughtn't I to keep it for next Sunday?"

"Do you think you ought?" asked the conductor, with a smile.

"Why, yes, I think so. If I meant it for them, it's theirs just the same as if I gave it—isn't it? Perhaps not," she added, rather undecided as to whom the money was due. "If it is right for me to give it to you, you may take it; only I didn't want to take it from the missionaries when they're so kind and good to go away from their nice homes to teach the poor heathen."

"Keep your money, little one," said he, "the missionaries may have it;" and, with a relieved mind, Rosy tucked her penny safely away in the depths of her pocket.

Pretty soon she began to jolt about in a very unsteady way on her seat; her head came nodding forward with a jerk at every motion of the car, and at last she sank back against Ned, quite unable to hold herself up any longer. The boy put his arm around her, and drew her to him, letting her head rest comfortably upon his lap, and the tired child slept quietly until they reached their journey's end.

As Ned took her hand to lead her from the car, after waking her from her slumber, a gentleman who sat beside him touched his arm. "How do you mean to get that little girl home again?" said he. "She is tired out. She can never walk down to Wooster Street."

"If she can't, then me and her brother must carry her between us," said Ned.

"Take this," and the gentleman put twenty-five cents into his hand; "that will ride you all."

"Thank you hearty, Mister," said the boy.

Rosy turned back with a smiling face to speak her grati-

tude, and as she left the car he heard her say, "Isn't that a good man? And he's real pretty."

Ned laughed, and the gentleman smiled too; but he knew that the simple words came from the pure depths of her grateful little heart.

"Oh, Ned! is that where we've got to go?" asked Rosy, looking up fearfully at the wooden huts built on the top of the rocks, that rose abruptly from the street on which they stood.

The early moon shone down brightly on the miserable hovels, bringing all their squalor and wretchedness to view with almost the clearness of daylight. Rosy shuddered as she glanced up, and thought that her brother was probably in one of those dens, and she should perhaps have to enter it to bring him out.

"How do you get there, Ned? We couldn't climb those rocks."

He led her around the corner to a flight of stairs, as crazy and dangerous to mount as those at "Joe Turner's;" but the rock sloped considerably on this side, and, aiding Rosy to step on it, Ned went up by the stairs, and holding her hand firmly in his, let her walk up the slope.

"There's Hall's," he said, pointing to one of the hovels; "but I don't want to take you in, Rosy. Let me see, first, if I can't call him out."

"Don't leave me alone here, Ned."

"No, come with me to the door. Stand there by the corner, out of sight, while I call him."

He gave a low, peculiar whistle, which was answered from the inside, and the door was slightly opened.

"Is that you, Ned?" said a voice. "Come in."

"No, I can't to-night. Is Will Conroy there?"

"Yes."

"Tell him I want to speak with him."

The door was closed for a moment, then opened again, and Will came out.

"Whistle when you want to come back," said a voice from within, and the door was shut once more.

"What do you want?" asked Will, roughly.

"We want you to come home. Rosy!"

She crept around from her hiding-place and came close to Will.

"We've come to fetch you home, Will, dear. Please come."

For a moment he looked at her, too much surprised to speak. "How did you ever get to this place?" he said, at last.

"Ned brought me. He's been so good, Will, you don't know. He took me over to Turner's to look for you, and then brought me here. He paid his own money for the riding, too."

Ned had slowly led the way down toward the street, and the others had followed. He had reached the broken stairs, and paused now to turn and say, "She meant to walk all the way up here, the brave little lass; but the conductor gave us the ride for what I had. If I hadn't owned a few cents, she'd have walked it, after trotting over to the river, all for the sake of getting you home."

"I can't go home," said Will, sullenly.

"Why not, Willie?" asked Rosy.

"'Cause the old man's angry at me. He won't let me in."

"Yes, he will; and poor mother feels so bad to have you out. She says she'll go distracted if you stay from her to-night. And I want you, too. Do come, Will, when I've come so far to fetch you."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," exclaimed Ned, angrily, "to fight off in that fashion when the child's wore herself off her feet searching for you!"

"Don't, Ned! don't speak cross to him! He'll go with me, I know. He's only tired and cold. Come, Willie. A gentleman gave us money to ride; we'll all go together."

They had reached the street, Ned guiding Rosy down

as he had led her up, being afraid to trust her on the stairs. She already held his hand in hers, and now she slipped her fingers into Will's palm, and turned toward the Avenue.

"Come, let's go home."

The boys both yielded to the impulse she gave them, and walked on beside her until they reached the railroad. But when Ned would have lifted her into the car, Will put him back and lifted her himself. The car was full, but room being made for one, Ned motioned Will to the seat, and he took it, placing Rosy on his knee.

"Bend down your head, Will," she said softly, cuddling up close to him.

He bent his head, and she put her arm around his neck as she whispered, "I'm so real glad to have you home."

"Are you, Rosy?" he asked, in the same low tone, looking doubtfully at her.

"Yes, indeed I am."

"What makes you glad to have me?"

"Because mother's eyes won't look so sorry. And because — because —"

"Well, why?"

"Because," and the little girl's voice dropped so low that he could scarcely catch the words, "I think that the angels in heaven will see a light in Jesus' eyes, too."

"What made you come after me," said Will, after a pause, "when I was so ugly to you?"

"Oh, we won't think about that any more," said Rosy. "Ned told me you thought father wouldn't let you come home, so I said I'd come and bring you."

"You're better off without me," said the boy, gloomily.

"No, we aint. Now, Will, let's begin all new. Let's do like Jesus wants to have us. You were right when you said that I didn't behave as if I loved Him; but I'm very sorry, and I'm going to try to be His own dear child now. Will you try, too, Willie?"

He did not answer her, but for the first time in years he kissed the face which lay upon his breast. The colour rushed in a quick tide over cheek and brow at the warm touch of those almost strange lips, and for very gladness she could not speak, even in the whispered tones in which their conversation had been carried on.

"Ned," said Rosy, as they parted at the house door, the boy refusing to go in to eat his supper with them, "if there's ever anything I can do for you, will you let me do it? Not that I don't like to think that you've done so much for me," she added, with ready tact, "but I'd be so glad to show you how much I thank you."

He drew her away from Will, and, bending close to her, said, "Ask God to make me as sweet and good as you."

"No, no," she said, moving back with a startled look. "I'm not good at all. But, Ned, I'll ask Him to make you dear and good like the Lord Jesus. That's what I'll ask Him. Good-night, you nice, kind Ned!"

"Good-night," and the boy mounted the stairs to his lonely attic room. But he was not desolate that night, for though his limbs ached with weariness his heart was light and joyous, and the poor, unfurnished room, seem filled with the music of angel voices whispering words of love and blessing to him who had "done what *he* could."

"Now come, Willie," said Rosy, leading the way toward their room.

"No, I can't come. I dare not face father," said he, hanging his head.

But at that moment Mrs. Conroy, who had been anxiously listening for every sound, opened the door and looked out.

"Rosalie dear, is that yourself?"

"Yes, mother, and Will. Bid him come in. He's afraid father'll be hard on him; but he won't, will he?"

"No, indeed. Come in then, boy, and tell him how sorry you are. And put past all your evil ways, and be a

good son to us. Sure and the little sister has had a hard hunt for you, so she has."

"I didn't mind," said Rosy, as she came in, still holding Will by the hand.

And when her father told her to come to him, and, lifting her on his knee, let her lay her head upon his breast while he told her that she was his comfort and his great delight, she rested there so peacefully, folded in his loving arms, that she forgot all her trouble and fatigue in the glad thought that she had cheered her dear father and mother, and had pleased her precious Saviour.

CHAPTER X.

ROSY'S REWARD.

"THERE'S a knock at the door, Rosy; run and see who it is."

Mrs. Conroy was standing before a washtub busily employed; for the week's wash had fallen behindhand, and the children's clothes needed to be made clean for the Sabbath. Rosy, who was sitting on the floor, with both the babies on her lap and little Rob close beside her, had some difficulty in obeying her mother's command; but when the twins were safely laid in the cradle, and Rob had scrambled up to follow her, as usual, she opened the door. There stood Miss Raymond.

"Why, Rosy," said she, "I did not expect to find you here this morning! I supposed that the little merchant would be out with her basket."

"No, ma'am," said Mrs. Conroy, wringing the suds from her hands and coming forward to welcome her visitor. "I was forced to keep her home the day to see to the little ones, while I washed up the bits of clothes against the

Sunday. You see the father he's no good just now, and so I had to keep her in. She didn't need to go so much this week, for my boy's at work."

Miss Raymond looked at Rosy, who, having given her a chair, now stood beside her, holding her hand. The little girl did not speak, but she pressed close to her side, and looked up into her face with eyes which told her all she wanted to know.

"And how is your foot doing?" asked the lady, turning to Mr. Conroy, who sat near her.

"It's doing finely, ma'am, thank you. I'm thinking I'll be about again by next week. It's not been so bad as we feared at the first. Things look brighter for us than they did. The boy has been steady at his work all the week, and if he'll only keep on till Saturday night, he'll make enough to pay the rent; and then we'll manage to fight along till I get out again."

"Do you suppose that he will continue to work, so that Rosy can go to school?"

"I'm sure I couldn't say, ma'am. There's no telling at all what he'll do. He seems to have taken a good turn now, but we don't know how long it will last. I wouldn't like to have her begin, and then take her away again after a few days."

"No, that would not be best," said Miss Raymond; "but I have been thinking of another plan. If Rosy could be spared from home for two hours every morning, she might come up to my house and I would teach her. Could she do that?"

"O mother, please!" exclaimed Rosy, springing forward with her face all a-glow with delight.

But the next moment she drew back. Who was to lead her blind father?

"Look at the eyes of her," said the mother, smiling, as Rosy stood waiting for the answer; quietly, but with her eyes fixed eagerly on her. "Sure, Miss Raymond, we

don't know how to thank you, ma'am ; but I can't tell how we'd do with the father."

" Couldn't I —— " Rosy paused again, afraid of saying too much and appearing selfish.

" Couldn't you do what, Rosy ? " asked Miss Raymond.

" Perhaps it wouldn't do, ma'am : but I thought maybe I could take father with me in the morning, and leave him on a good corner while I go to you ; and then go back for him, and lead him where he wants to go. And I could study in the evenings, or while I stand in the street by father. I am sure I could do that," she added, her earnestness overcoming her timidity.

" I am sure you could, too," said Miss Raymond ; " if your parents will consent."

" There's no question of consent, ma'am," said the father. " We're only too glad, and thankful for your kindness. The good Lord will remember and reward you, Miss Raymond."

" He has already given me all the reward," she said, patting Rosy's flushed cheek. " I would do much more than that to bring such a glow into a child's face ; especially when I know that the child has been trying, with what strength she has, to lighten other hearts. Isn't that so, Rosy ? "

" Indeed it is, ma'am," said Mrs. Conroy, as Rosy only smiled in answer to the question : " 'twas she that found Will on the Sunday night, and a long, long search she had for him before she brought him home here. And she's just been that kind and tender to him ever since, that I think the boy's fairly shamed into doing his best. I begin to have a great hope of him now, and all through her. It's her own doing, every bit of it, for I never urged her to go for him."

" I am so glad !" said the lady, in a tone which told how truly glad she was, and which echoed all through Rosy's joyous heart.

Miss Raymond sat for some time longer talking with them, and then rose to leave, taking with her a hearty blessing, partially expressed in words, but a large portion of which was laid away in the depths of those warm hearts, which, during all the years of their lives, should follow her with their earnest prayer and grateful love.

"Put on your shawl and hood, and come down to the street with me, Rosy," she said, as she opened the door.

The hood was donned in a twinkling, and passing out of the house together, they went down the alley to the street.

"I wish you needn't go yet, Miss Raymond," said Rosy. "I do so like to have you come to see us."

"I must go now, dear," she said, pausing at the entrance to the court. "You may come up to-morrow morning, and we will make all the arrangements about your lessons, so that you can begin with them on Monday. You must be there punctually at nine o'clock. You won't forget that, will you?"

"Oh, no, Miss Raymond. You don't think I'll keep you waiting when you're so good as to teach me? I'll be there in good time, and I'll study just as hard as I know how."

"I shall not make you work so very hard," said Miss Raymond, smiling at her.

"I am so happy," she added, bending her head, and speaking in a lower tone, "that you have begun so well. My brave little soldier means to fight her battle through, I am sure. But she must remember that all her strength must come from her Captain. She has been very ready to buckle the armour on, and now she must see that it is kept bright. You have made me very, very glad."

"And I am so glad, you don't know," said Rosy, clinging to her. "But, Miss Raymond, you said last Sunday that the time for resting in the sweet, sunny spot was after the fight was fought; and somehow I seem to be in it all the time. The battle isn't over, I know; it's a

little hard yet to be real good to him when he comes home pretty cross; but it isn't wrong to feel like singing and being very happy all day,—is it, Miss Raymond?"

"No, darling. God wants His little child to be joyous and gay. You need never be afraid of being too glad, for He loves to see you so. Good-by."

"Good-by."

"Oh, but aint she a sweet one!" said the child to herself as she stood gazing after Miss Raymond's retreating figure, unwilling to lose even the last glimpse. "She's the dearest and best that is. Except the dear God who gave her to me," she added, folding her little hands and looking reverently up into the blue sky.



NED DOLAN'S GARRET.

"Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil."

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NED DOLAN'S GARRET.

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE DICK.

"BLACK your boots, sir, black your boots? Shine 'em up first-rate, sir. Only ten cents, sir."

The man addressed hastened on, paying no heed to the boy who, foot-block in hand, pressed close beside him.

"Black 'em for eight cents, sir. Come, that's cheap when they're so bad as that. They'll take a deal of scraping before the brush can touch 'em."

The man glanced down at his feet, and noticing for the first time that his boots were covered with the mud which lay on the streets, said,—

"Well, you may brush them off. I've been through some very deep mud."

"Your boots tell that story," said the boy, "but they won't tell it long;" and in a twinkling the foot-block was on the sidewalk in a retired corner, and he was brushing away with an energy which soon brought a bright polish on the dull leather.

"There, sir, that's handsome, aint it?" asked the boy, surveying his work with a very pleased air.

"Yes, you have done very well," was the reply. And tossing down a ten-cent piece, the man turned away.

"Look here, mister, this aint right," said the boy; but the customer went on his way, not having heard his call.

He sprang up to stop him, but as he had his implements to gather together, the man was already at some distance from him.

"I say," said the boy, gaining his side at last, after elbowing his way with some difficulty through the crowd which thronged the street, "I say, mister, you gave me too much."

"I gave you ten cents, did I not? Certainly I did,—that is ten cents," he said, pointing to the money in the boy's outstretched hand.

"But I told you I'd do it for eight."

"So you did. It seems to me that you are a pretty honest fellow."

"I am honest," said the boy, lifting his head and looking full into the eyes which were searching his face. "And I don't ever mean to be anything else while my name is Ned Dolan."

"From whom did you learn such a good lesson? From your father?"

"No. I never knew my father and mother. They both died when I was a baby."

"Who brought you up?"

"Nobody. I came up of myself, I guess; nobody else had much to do with it."

"Then where did you learn to be so strictly honest?"

"I learned it from——" He hesitated, his lips quivered, and the muscles of his face worked strongly.

"Never mind that," he said, recovering himself; "only I did learn it, and here's your ten cents."

"They were fairly earned," said his customer. "Keep 'em, and I hope that you may always be as honest as you are now."

"I'll try for it, anyway," said Ned, in a low voice, as he faced his steps. "I'll never let her see me do a

mean thing, nor a bad one neither, if I can help it ;" and as he spoke he glanced up toward the far-off sky.

He was a rough-looking boy. His shoes were sadly in want of a little of the care and attention which he bestowed on the boots of his patrons ; and the patches which ornamented them on either side, and on toe and heel, had evidently been sewn there by his own hand, which was not that of a master-workman. His clothes were as worn and patched as his shoes, and the old hat which covered his head was so stained and weather-beaten that its original colour was quite lost in a variety of dull shades.

There were no dull shades, however, in the face which looked out from beneath the slouched rim of the old hat. It was a face which showed its nationality in every line and feature. Brimful of Irish wit and fun, with a mass of dark curly hair clustering over the rather low forehead, and a pair of clear grey eyes through which the large, generous heart within looked out on all with whom he had to do.

The evening was fast closing in, and Edward Dolan, thinking that it was of no avail to wait for further custom, turned his face homeward.

"This is as poor a day as ever I had," he said to himself as he walked on, still on the watch for another opportunity to earn a few cents. "Only one pair! It's too muddy to-day. I suppose they think the next step they take will make them as bad as ever. Well, this'll get supper for me and Dick, anyway."

He had a long walk before him, and felt quite ready for his frugal supper by the time he reached home. He had stopped on his way at a bakery to buy a loaf of bread.

"There's a penny or two in my pocket," he said as he left the store. "I'll just run in and get my mug, and I'll get a pennyworth of milk for me and a bit of cheese for Dick."

He had reached the entrance to an alley leading from the street to a rear house which he entered, and, passing up two flights of rickety stairs, came to a small room directly under the slope of the broken roof. There was a little window with two panes of greenish glass, through which the light was supposed to enter; but the room never boasted more than a twilight brightness, and now it was entirely dark. But the boy had no difficulty in finding what he wanted. He went unhesitatingly to a certain corner, and, taking from a small shelf a brown earthen mug, was passing out again when a slight rustle and sound of scratching made him pause.

"O Dick, is that you, little man? Wait a bit, I'll be back in a minute."

The little feet seemed to scamper away into the darkness, and Ned went out again. He soon returned, and, striking a light, disclosed the proportions of as small a room as ever was called by the name of home. It was a mere nook beneath the peak of the roof, through whose rents and holes he could study the stars as he lay on his bed, which occupied the main part of the floor. The bed and a wooden stool formed the furniture of the apartment; the shelf from which he had taken the mug for his milk being amply sufficient for his stock of table utensils, which consisted of the mug in question and a broken plate.

He stood still with his head a little on one side, as if listening, after he had lighted his candle; but hearing no sound, called "Dick! come, Dick!"

Then he listened again, but there was no response; and going to the side of the room he bent down, and putting his mouth close to a hole in the wall, gave a sharp whistle. In a moment there came again that sound of tiny feet scampering along with the utmost speed: but this time it was not over the floor but in the wall; and the next instant a bright-eyed mouse peeped out cautiously from the hole.

"Hollo, Dick!" said Ned; and as he spoke, the mouse darted forward and ran into his hand, which he had stretched out toward it.

"Well, little man, where have you been all day?" asked the boy, in a fondling, tender tone. "I came near coming home without any supper for either of us. Are you hungry? Come, let's have something to eat. I've bought a pennyworth of cheese for you."

The tiny creature looked up in his face as if it understood every word he spoke, and when he produced from his pocket a morsel of cheese which he laid on his knee, it established itself comfortably beside the rich repast, and proceeded to make the most of its opportunities, pausing every now and then to look up at its master, or to raise its head in answer to the caressing hand which stroked it gently.

The boy made his supper of a generous half of the loaf which he had bought, and his pennyworth of milk; eating his plain fare with as keen a relish as that with which the mouse enjoyed its cheese.

"What! Are you through already?" he exclaimed, as his companion ceased its nibbling and turned its head away from the remains of its supper. "Why, I never saw you so soon satisfied before! you must have had a good feast somewhere. Why didn't you bring me home something nice, you little rogue?"

The "rogue" gave a sharp squeal as the boy ended his sentence by pulling one of its velvet ears, and he snapped at his fingers in pretended wrath.

"No biting, Dick, not even in play. There, now, go to sleep."

He lifted the mouse in his hand and dropped him into the outer pocket of his jacket, where the little fellow curled himself up and lay as quiet as possible. Edward sat for a few moments longer on the stool, and then, rising, he placed his mug on the shelf again beside the remainder of

his loaf, and throwing himself upon the bed, lay there wide awake, thinking.

"It does seem queer," he said to himself, after he had lain quiet a long while; it does seem queer that there's never been anybody to look after me, that's a fact. Bringing up! That man must have meant teaching, I suppose; being took care of, too, I should think: but I never had as much bringing up as I've given to Dick here;"—and he laid his hand gently on the pocket which contained his pet—"except what I got from the little thing up there above the stars, God bless her!" he added; "and yet I've got up somehow, till here I am, fifteen year old: and I've come up pretty fair. I've got a home, and gets enough to eat most times, and I've got good friends. There's Mrs. Conroy below-stairs, and Rosy; and then here's dear old Dick. I wonder how it's all come about! Margery would say God took care of me; I suppose He did, too."

He lay looking up through the broken roof to the sky, as content and peaceful as if he had all that could make life comfortable and happy, until weariness overcame his wakefulness and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

TEMPTATION.

THE sound of a step upon the creaking, broken stairs, roused Ned from his slumber, and raising his head he called out, "Who's there?"

"Joe Turner," was the reply; "are you alone?"

"Yes, come in." And Ned sprang up and struck a light.

"Been to bed already?" said his visitor, in a tone of surprise. "It's only just after ten o'clock!"

"I dare say; but I was tired and lonesome, so I thought I couldn't do better than go to sleep."

"Why didn't you come up to my place? There's a lot of fellows having a good time up there now. Let's go up."

"No, we'd best stay where we are," said Ned, seating himself on the bed in order to leave the stool for the visitor.

"Seems to me you're rather shy of us in these days," said Joe. "You haven't been there this long while; the fellows are all talking about it: what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing: only I think I'm best off at home."

"What, shut up in this little den, with never a body to speak to? It's mean of you, Ned, to cut all your old friends."

"I don't cut them," replied Ned, warmly. "I'm always ready to do them a good turn, and you know it."

"I don't deny that: you're a right good fellow, if you are a bit queer; and the rest of the boys are just as willing to do you a good turn. That's what I've come to see you about. We've heard of a first-rate job, and we mean to give you a share in it."

He bent his head close to Ned's and whispered a few words in his ear. The boy listened attentively, but as soon as Joe had finished what he had to say, he answered quietly,—

"I can't join."

"Why not?"

"Because, I've made up my mind never to have anything to do with such work."

"Oh, come, Ned, that's all cant," said Joe, persuasively. "You don't mean to keep on at boot-blackening all your life, do you?"

"No, I mean to look out for a place as soon as I can

get decent clothes to put on ; but no one will take me now, looking as I do."

"Come, then, I'll tell you what we'll do. If you'll join us we'll make you captain of the band ; and you shall have a double share of all we make. You needn't do a stroke of work if you don't choose ; but you've got the best head in our set, and we want you to plan the business all out. We'll do the work. You can buy clothes out of your profits, and then you can get a respectable place."

It was a tempting offer, and for a moment Ned weighed it in his mind, but not for long.

"I can't do it," he said, after a little thought. "It's a cheating business, and I won't do it."

He spoke so firmly that Joe Turner's quick temper flashed up at once.

"You've done worse yourself many a time," he said, angrily. "I tell you what it is, if you don't join us we'll give you up entirely, the whole lot of us. We'll never call you friend again."

Ned did not doubt him ; and the thought of being thus renounced made him hesitate. They were a lawless, wicked company, this set of boys, of whom Turner was the leading spirit, but they were the only friends he had had for years, and it would be hard to be shunned, as he knew he should be if he refused. More than once he had opposed them in their dishonest schemes, and he suspected that this proposition was a sort of test, and that they had determined, if he rejected an offer so profitable to himself, to throw him off entirely. If he had had father or mother, sister or brother, or even one single friend of his own age, to whom he could have turned for sympathy and love, the struggle might not have been so hard. But his lonely heart clung to these old companions, and the test was a severe one.

He sat with his elbows resting on his knees, and his

hands supporting his chin, thinking, until Joe said contemptuously,—

“You don’t calculate to turn pious, I suppose?”

He could have said nothing which would have told more effectively against his own interest. Ned raised his head with a start.

“To turn pious?” he said to himself. “He means by that, to be true and honest.”

“Yes,” he said aloud, in a determined voice; “if you mean turn fair and honest, I’ve done it a’ready, and I never mean to go back from it.”

“Nonsense! That’s some of the stuff you heard from that chit of a girl——”

Ned sprang to his feet and caught him by the collar.

“If you ever dare to speak her name, I’ll thrash you!” he said, furiously. “I don’t know how you ever heard of her, and I don’t care to know; but if ever you dare to speak of her again, so sure as my name’s Ned Dolan, I’ll——”

“Come, come,” gasped Turner—for Ned’s angry hand almost choked him—“let go my collar. I didn’t know you’d take it so hard. I’ll take it all back.”

Ned released his hold and sat down again. Joe stood up at a little distance from him. Ned was twice as powerful as he, and he had no desire to receive the punishment with which he had been threatened. But he was very unwilling to give up his point. The whole clique of boys to which they both belonged had always depended upon Ned’s wit and foresight to plan out all their enterprises, and although, as he had suspected, they had arranged this new undertaking in order to ascertain once for all whether he would rejoin them, they really needed his assistance.

“Well, Ned,” said Joe, breaking the silence, “we’ll leave it as it is. I’m sorry I vexed you, and we won’t call the matter ended here. If you feel like coming up to—

morrow night and just talking it over, come. I'll have the boys all there, and we'll have a good time. If you don't choose to join you needn't, but you can come up and we'll have one of our jolly old times. Shake hands and let's be friends again."

Ned took the proffered hand readily. It was no wish of his to quarrel with Turner or any of his old companions. His warm Irish heart having scarce any one else to love turned very fondly toward these former friends, and he was more than willing to forgive and forget, whatever his determination might be with regard to becoming the captain of the company. Joe left him, and he threw himself upon the bed once more, and lay listening to the sound of his visitor's heavy boots as they creaked down the stairs. When all was still, he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. For a long while the effort was a vain one, but at length his thoughts grew more and more indistinct, until finally they were lost in dreams.

He had been lying quiet for some time, when a face peeped in at him from the stairs, watched him closely for a few minutes, and then, seemingly satisfied that he was fast asleep, Joe Turner came into the room. He had taken off the thick boots which had made so much noise as he went down the stairs, and now, passing the bed, he went to the corner beneath the shelf where Ned had placed his foot-block, and, opening it very softly, felt for its contents. Everything was in its place; and, lifting it from the floor, Joe moved across the little room again, carrying it in his hand. It took but an instant to reach the stairs, which he descended noiselessly, and, passing out into the alley, made his way to the spot where he had left his boots. In another moment they were on his feet and he was running swiftly down the street, carrying with him Ned's only means of support. Perhaps the wicked triumph in his face would have been even deeper than it was had he known that the boy was that night penniless.

"He's caught now," he said to himself, as he ran on at his utmost speed. "He must come back to us or starve."

But Joe Turner did not remember that there is One in heaven who makes "all things work together for good to them that love God."

A little more than a year before this, Edward Dolan had first heard the story of the love of Jesus for toiling, sinful, human souls. It had been told him by a child whose young heart, itself overflowing with love for her Lord and for this friendless boy whom she longed to bring to His feet, had told the tale with such earnestness, and such simple, childlike faith, that its truth struck home to his heart. And when, a few weeks later, the little one was lifted over the rough places of earth, where her tottering feet might have tripped and stumbled, and placed safely in one of the flower-bordered paths in the garden of the Lord, He who had kept that fair garden above did not forget to tend and cherish the tiny seed which the hand of His child had dropped into that field, in which the weeds had grown so thick and rank that there was scarcely room for the springing plant to rear its trembling head.

Little by little the weeds had been removed; day by day that darkened heart had been lightened by another and another silver ray of love and faith, until now it was ready to give up the friends to whom it had clung for years, if to keep them it must yield to sin.

As Ned composed himself to rest after Joe Turner's visit, he had glanced up at the stars above him, and whispered, "Margery and Margery's Jesus will be enough for me." And it was that thought which had eased him of his trouble, and his lonely longing for some one to love him when the friends of his boyhood turned their faces from him.

CHAPTER III.

NED'S LOSS.

THE patter of Dick's little feet scampering over the bare floor roused Ned very early the next morning. Only a faint glimmer of light entered his room, but he rose at once; for it would be none too early for his first customers by the time he reached his stand on the steps of the Astor House. It did not require much time to prepare for his walk, and, having given Dick a breakfast of the remnant of cheese which he had laid away the night before, Ned went to the corner where he had placed his foot-block.

"Where have I put the thing?" he said, glancing uneasily around. "I left it there, I'm sure. Who could take it?"

Again and again he looked around the unfurnished room, his face growing more anxious every moment. Suddenly it brightened.

"Maybe Mrs. Conroy might have wanted it, and come in softly, for fear of waking me."

He ran hurriedly down the stairs, paused for an instant at a door on the lower floor, and, hearing some one stirring within, knocked. A woman opened the door, and, when she saw who was there, moved aside at once to let him pass her.

"Come in, Ned," she said, cordially, "come in and warm you at the fire. I've only just lighted it; but it's burning up real good. Why, what's come to you, boy?" she asked, as she caught a fuller view of his pale face.

"Have you borrowed my blacking and things, Mrs. Conroy?" asked Ned. "You or Rosy?"

"Surely, no. Leastways I never did the like, and it

would be a quare thing for Rosy to do. Is it gone, then?"

"Yes, and I know it was there last night."

"Well, well, but that's bad! Rosy, child, you don't know any tidings of Ned's block,—surely?"

"No, mother," said a little girl, coming from an inner room. "Have you lost it, Ned?"

"It's gone," said the boy, "and I haven't got the first cent to buy another."

"How has it gone? Did a thief take it?" asked Rosy.

"It must have been a thief. Somebody must have took it in the night. If ever I catch him, I'll teach him what it is to rob a fellow of all he's got," he answered, angrily.

"There, there, Neddie, don't you mind," said Mrs. Conroy, kindly. "Come in and take a bite with us, and maybe it'll turn up somehow. Set a place for him, Rosy, when you put on the plates. We'll see to him the day."

"I've got breakfast upstairs," said Ned, who knew very well that the Conroys had hard work to find food enough for themselves, there being four children beside Rosy to provide for. "And I must try what I can do about my things. Maybe I might search them out. I can't let them go so easy."

But no inquiries, no amount of searching, were of any avail. Ned finally gave up the quest in despair, and wandered about the streets during the remainder of the day looking for employment, only to return at evening tired out, hungry, and penniless.

As he entered the alley which led to his home, Rosy Conroy met him. She saw at a glance that he had been utterly unsuccessful.

"You haven't found it, Ned?"

"No, not a sign of it!" and he passed on.

She watched him anxiously for a moment, then ran quickly after him, gaining his side just as he reached the stairs.

"Ned, may I come up in your room for a while?"

He did not want her there. He was thoroughly worn-out, discouraged, and at war with the world. Every man's hand seemed against him, and he felt as if it were no more than fair that he should lift his hand against every man in his turn. But the little upturned face had such a coaxing look in it that he could not resist. So he answered, not very cordially,—

"Well, you may come."

Rosy noticed his unusual tone; but she had a reason for her request, so she slipped her hand into his, and went with him up the trembling, unsteady stairs, knowing all the while that she was not quite welcome. There was no cheery whistle for little Dick this evening. Ned pushed his one stool toward Rosy, telling her rather gruffly to sit down, and, folding his arms across his breast, began to pace restlessly up and down the floor.

"You ought to have two stools, Ned," said Rosy, wishing to break the unpleasant silence, and doubtful as to the best manner of addressing him in his present mood.

"Everything ought to be changed from what it is," said the boy. "It's a mean, miserable world!" he went on, angrily. "It's no use for a fellow to try to do right and live decent. He'll just get pushed down and down as fast as he tries to rise up, and he may as well give in at once, and stop all this striving and toiling for something better. I'm sick of it all. Last night——"

He paused suddenly, and strode on for some moments without speaking.

"What about last night, Ned?"

"No matter; you'd best not know it."

Rosy sat still for some time, looking at him. Then she rose from her seat, and knelt down beside the bed. It was not the first time that she had knelt upon that garret-floor. These two young wayfarers had begun their Christian life together. Hand-in-hand they had struggled on during

the past year ; often slipping back, often stumbling, but ever aiding one another as best they might in their difficult journey. And one of Rosy's greatest pleasures had been to say her evening prayer in Ned's quiet little room, where she could see the stars shining down upon her, and to talk to him of all her trials and perplexities. His happy, light-hearted disposition, made him look at everything in such a bright light that the spirit was infectious, and a talk with Ned always cheered her when she was a little sad or wearied.

But in this strangely-different mood in which she found him to-night she must be the helper, and she felt that he needed assistance sorely. What could she do ? He answered her so roughly that she was almost afraid to speak to him ; and yet she dared not leave him, for there was a great fear at Rosy's heart. And so she had knelt down beside the bed to ask God to befriend him ; and Ned stood still to listen, as she said, tremulously,—“ Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” and then broke down completely, and hid her face on the bed.

That was more than Ned could stand, even in his present temper. He sat down and lifted her on his knee.

“ Rosy,” he said, after a moment's silence, “ what made you say that ? ”

“ I couldn't help it, Ned. You aint angry with me,—are you ? ” she asked, lifting her tearful face to his.

“ No ; but I want to know what made you say just those words, and not the rest.”

“ Because I thought you needed just those,” said Rosy. “ Because it seemed as if you was almost ready to stop trying to be good. And then, when you said something about last night, I thought, maybe——”

“ Well, Rosy ? ”

“ Mother told me Joe Turner was here for a long while last night, and I was afraid that he was trying to coax

you back. And when you said you might as well give over trying, I was so frightened lest you'd go back, that I had to ask Jesus to help you. Oh, Neddie, Neddie, don't go into temptation!"

"Lead us not," replied Ned, thoughtfully. "I wonder what that means? God never leads any one into sin, I suppose. Do you know what it means, Rosy?"

"I guess it means something like this," said Rosy. "I never thought much about it's saying 'lead;' but you know Jesus goes before us, and leads us like a shepherd leads his sheep, and I suppose it means, Please don't lead us into any place where there'll be so much temptation that we can't help sinning. Don't you believe that's it, Ned?"

"Humph," said Ned, "if that's what it means, it takes a fellow to be pretty careful where he goes after making that prayer, if he don't want to stop the answer to it."

"And you don't want to stop the answer—do you, Ned? You want Jesus to be with you; and you won't go where He don't lead, will you?"

"You've got it, Rosy!" exclaimed Ned. "That's always been the biggest bother to me ever since I first set out to do right, and began to say that prayer every day. I never could tell what it meant, and so I never took much comfort in saying it; but now I like it a heap better. It's been a real plague to me all day, just because I didn't understand it rightly. I'll tell you how it was. Joe Turner came up here last night, and he *was* trying to coax me back, as you call it. Well, to be honest with you, I have got a kind of a longing after the old fellows; and sometimes I do get dreadful lonesome up here, and I hanker after them some, for they was all good friends to me, if they wasn't so good to others. But when Joe first came up, he wanted me to do something that I wouldn't do because it wasn't honest; so he tried to win me by

telling me that I should be the captain of the company, and needn't do any cheating work if I didn't choose. Now I do like to be first man, first-rate; and he a'most caught me there: but in a minute I saw what would come of it, and I told him 'No.' He was real mad, and said that all the fellows would cut me,—and I know they will,—but I stuck to it, and he went away, telling me to come up there to-night to a frolic, and talk it over.

"Well, this morning I jumped up as spry as you please, and I said the prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and all. I've been in temptation all day long. I've had many a chance to snatch a bit to eat, without being caught: I could have stolen a good coat this morning, and no one would have been the wiser; and here was this big temptation to go up to Joe's, where they will have a hot supper and plenty of fun, tugging and dragging at me all the time. And it was a real hard one, too, Rosy, for I do love some of the fellows right well—I do so; and it's hard to give them up, and have them cut me, as I know they will."

The boy's voice trembled as he spoke the last words and Rosy crept nearer to him, and drew her arm a little closer about his neck.

"I'd a'most made up my mind to go when you met me," he went on, after a pause. "I felt as if God hadn't paid any heed to me, but had led me right into temptation, when I'd been doing my best to keep out of it, and I felt as if I didn't much care if I did do wrong. I guess one reason why I was so cross to you was, because I was trying to make up my mind to do what I knew was bad. I never remembered that I was walking right into the road which He led me out of last night. I do believe He was leading me the other way all the time, only I would not follow, until He sent you to show me that I was running ahead on my own hook. I wonder why He let my block be stole from me, Rosy?"

" Maybe it was to see whether you 'd do right, when it was so hard to do it," said Rosy, softly.

" Maybe it was. But I tell you, Rosy, I aint going to let the want of a blacking-box keep me from holding on to Him. I've been a poor, mean kind of a fellow to-day, but I do believe He'll help me to get round again."

" And you won't say again, that it's no use to try to be good, Ned?"

" No, I won't *say* it, and I'll try not to *think* it. And I'll promise not to go up to Joe's. Only, Rosy, I can't promise not to think about the fellows some; for, even if they are bad, they're all the friends I've got."

" There's mother and me, Neddie."

" Yes, I know it, and you're first-rate, too; but I can't help kind of holding on to the boys in my heart. But I'm glad there's you and your mother, and my little Dick."

They had had a long talk, and now Rosy bade him good-night and slipped away.

After she had gone, Ned went to call his mouse from his hiding-place. As he sat down upon his stool, his hand touched something which lay upon the floor, and lifting it, he found a large slice of bread wrapped in paper. He knew whose delicate thoughtfulness had left it there, and there was something very like tears in his eyes when he whistled for Dick to come and share his unexpected supper.

CHAPTER IV.

RESOLUTION.

" NED, mother says come down to breakfast!" called Rosy Conroy's voice the next morning.

There was no door to the garret, and Ned heard the voice very plainly. But he did not answer.

"She'll think I'm gone out," he said to himself. But Rosy knew him better than he supposed, and, after calling once more, she mounted the stairs.

"Ned, didn't you hear me?" she asked, coming into the room. "Mother wants you to come down to breakfast."

"It's pretty early for breakfast," said Ned. "It's only just daylight."

"Well, it isn't ready yet; but she was afraid you'd slip out. Come down to our house and wait till it's ready."

"No, I'm going out, Rosy. Tell your mother I'm very thankful to her, but I guess I'll go ahead as quick as I can."

"Now, Ned, I know just what that means, and I think you'll be real unkind to go away hungry rather than take your breakfast from us. Mother'll be just as mad as she can be."

"And that won't be much to be afraid of," said Ned, laughing. "No, no, Rosy. I can't do it. You've got hard enough work getting along without me coming and eating your scant fare. I'll do better to-day than I did yesterday. I wouldn't wonder if it was my cross face that made everybody so shy of me."

"It isn't hard for us to get along now, Ned. My brother Will is working steady, and father is doing very well with his peddling. We have plenty; I wish you'd come."

Ned had another objection ready; but was prevented from giving it utterance by the appearance upon the field of Rosy's mother, who, thinking from the child's long absence that her mission had been unsuccessful, had come to aid her.

"What are you biding up here in the cold for?" she said, looking in from the stairs. "Come away down, and get a sup of coffee and a morsel of bread to warm you. Run along, Rosy, and mind the twins, for they're both onaisy the morn. Lend me the loan of your shoulder to

lean upon, Ned, till I get me down these bad stairs, for I'm a bit stiff with the rheumatiz the day."

"What are you at now?" asked Mrs. Conroy, as, having aided her down, the boy would have turned away.

"I must go out early and try to find a job, Mrs. Conroy. Good-by."

"There's no good-by said yet a bit," said Mrs. Conroy. "Do you think I'll let you turn hungry from my door, when you've had scarce a ha'porth to eat since yester morn? Go in and tend one of them babies, while I see to get the breakfast."

Thus urged, Ned yielded, to Rosy's great joy and the delight of her little brother and sister, for he was a general favourite.

All through the meal, Rosy watched Ned with great interest. There was something in his manner which puzzled her. It was not harsh and sharp as it had been on the previous evening, but it was very grave and composed—very different from his usual merry, cheery way; and more than once she saw him look around the table, letting his gaze rest first on one face and then on another with a strangely earnest, longing expression in his eyes. She wanted to call him aside and ask him if he were in trouble, but she did not quite like to do that; so when he left them all to try once more to find something to do, she followed him out of the house, thinking that he might perhaps say something which would make it easy for her to ask the question. He said nothing until they reached the street, and she bade him good-by. Then he turned back.

"Rosy, will you come up in my garret, and have another talk, when I come home to-night? I've got something to tell you."

"Tell me now, Neddle."

"No, I want to think a bit about it first. I'll tell you to-night."

"It isn't anything bad, is it, Ned?"

"No," said the boy, thoughtfully. "It's nothing bad. I hope it'll be something good."

And he walked away with that serious look still resting on his face, leaving Rosy to wonder what this "something good" could be, which made him so quiet and grave.

When Ned returned, he found Rosy sitting on the lower step of the staircase, waiting for him.

"You're there, are you?" he said, with a pleased look. "I thought you wouldn't be far off. Run in and tell your mother you won't be home to tea; I want you to have supper with me."

"Oh, that'll be nice! won't it, Ned? I'd like that."

"You go and tell your mother then, while I run out on an errand. I'll be back in a minute."

He went up for his mug, and by the time that Rosy was fairly seated again had returned with it full of milk.

"Come up, now," he said, as she rose to meet him. "I suppose you'd just as lief share the one cup, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Rosy, very willingly. "I'd like it all the better."

A tallow candle, fastened upright in a raw potato, afforded them as much light as they thought necessary, and they had a very cosy little supper, eating bread and butter off the same plate, and drinking milk out of the same cup. Ned chatted very pleasantly, but Rosy could not rid herself of the impression she had received in the morning that something was wrong, and much as she had enjoyed the anticipation of taking tea with him, she was very glad when the simple meal was over.

"Now he'll tell me all about it," she thought, when Ned rose to place his cup and plate on the shelf.

But when he came back he sat down beside her, and, leaning his head on his hand, seemed to give himself up to his thoughts. Rosy wanted to ask him what he meant to

talk about, but feeling too shy to come directly to the point she broke the ice by saying, rather timidly,—

“Did you earn much to-day, Ned?”

The boy started as if he had suddenly awakened from sleep. “What did you say, Rosy? I believe I was thinking.”

“I asked you if you earned much to-day.”

“I did pretty well. I went up to the Hudson River Station, and got one or two jobs carrying bags; and a lady gave me a paying errand. It was quite queer how that came about, too. I saw her standing there, after the cars came in, looking around kind of flurried like, and says I to her, ‘Want a boy, ma’am?’ She looked at me so earnest, and says she, ‘Can I trust you? Are you an honest boy?’ Before I had time to answer, somebody from behind me speaks up and says, ‘I’ll answer for him, madam; you can trust him.’ I turned round, and there was a man whose boots I blacked the day before I lost my block. He paid me too much, and I went after him with the money. He seemed right pleased that day, and when I looked at him as he spoke to the lady, says he, ‘I’m glad to do such an honest fellow a service,’ and he went off. The lady, she gave me a letter, and fifty cents, and told me to carry the letter to the street that was wrote down on it, and to give it to the gentleman whose name was there too. So I went down as quick as I could, and found the gentleman, and he gave me twenty-five cents. I told him the lady had paid me, but he said I was to keep it just the same, because I’d made such good speed.”

“It’s always best to be honest and fair, isn’t it, Ned?”

“Yes,” said Ned, slowly relapsing into thoughtfulness once more. “It is always best.”

Rosy saw that it was of no use to try to find out what she wanted to know by any roundabout course, so she said, boldly,—

"You told me you wanted to have a talk with me to-night, Ned. What is it about?"

"Come here, and I'll tell you, Rosy."

He was sitting on the floor beside the low window, and she went to him, and curled herself up beside him.

"I wanted to tell you something that I've been thinking of for a good while, and that I made up my mind to last night."

He put his arm around her, for he knew that his next words would pain her.

"I'm going away from here, Rosy."

"Going away from this house!" she exclaimed.

"Why, Ned! what takes you away? I can't let you go, you're such a great help to me. And—and—aint I a little bit of a help to you sometimes, Ned?"

"You're a help to me very often, Rosy. Last night you was a great, great help, for you caught hold of me and dragged me back when I'd most slipped into a very bad place. And you helped me to make up my mind to go away."

"I don't know what you mean, Ned," said Rosy, with a little sob. "I never meant you to leave me, I'm sure."

"I'll tell you how you did it. You taught me what that prayer meant, and I prayed it last night as hard as I could; and then I saw I couldn't stay here any longer, 'cause just as long as I stayed I kept God from answering me. You saw how bad off I was last night, and it won't be any better till I go away from this."

"But why will it be better in any other house, Ned? The boys will go after you wherever you go."

"Not if I go out of New York."

"Out of New York!" and the little girl lifted a very startled face to his. "O Ned!"

"Don't try to stop me, Rosy," he said, in a somewhat husky voice. "It's been hard work to make up my mind to leave all I have in the world; but there's no help for it. I thought at first that I would stay and fight it out, for it

seemed kind of mean to run away from the temptation ; but I believe it's best to go, after all. If I was sure of always feeling so set against it as I do now, I might risk staying here ; but I *don't* always feel so, and I don't dare trust myself when I'm a bit discouraged and out of heart. If I could get a good place and find steady work I might get along ; but I've done all I could in that way, and here I am yet. There's nothing else to be done. After what you said last night, I'm sure you wouldn't ask me to stay where you know I would be hard tempted. Would you ?"

"Where will you go ?" she asked, without replying to his question.

"Down South. They say there's plenty of work there."

That was more than Rosy could bear. She straightened herself up, looked into his face for a moment, and then, with a loud sob, laid her head down upon his knee.

"Rosy, Rosy, don't do so!" pleaded poor Ned, scarcely able to command his own voice. "It's been such hard work to fight it out, and now you're going to break me down again."

He lifted her up, and, resting her head against his shoulder, tried to soothe her, and by-and-by her tears ceased.

"It won't be for so very long, Rosy," he said, by way of comfort.

"But you'll get a fever or some other dreadful sickness, and die there, Ned."

"I guess God will bring me safe home. Don't you remember what comes after 'Lead us not into temptation ?'"

"'Deliver us from evil,'" whispered Rosy.

"And if He can do one He can do the other," said the boy. "Can't He ?"

"Yes. 'For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,'" said the little girl, in a steadier voice. "But, oh, Ned!" and the red lips quivered piteously again.

"I'll be all alone. There'll be nobody to help me to be good. I can't talk to anybody else like I can to you, 'cause nobody else seems to have just my troubles but you. And—and—somebody else will have this dear old garret, and I can't come up here where it's so still and so near God's sky to say my prayers. It'll be so much harder to be good."

"'For Thine is the kingdom, and the *power*,'" said the boy, quietly.

Rosy raised her head. "Ned," she said, softly, "I never heard you talk as you do to-night. You seem kind of different."

"I feel different, Rosy. Ever since I made up my mind real strong and hearty to go away I have felt different. It's more than a year that we've been trying to do right and to love Jesus Christ, but it seems as if I never knew how it all was till last night. I can't tell what I mean, but I feel older and stronger,—more like a man. And Jesus Christ doesn't seem to be far away in heaven, but right here in my old garret. It seems as if I could stand up beside Him, shoulder to shoulder, just like as if He was my older brother and would see me safe through every trouble. I've got very near to Him somehow."

"Yes, Ned, you've got very near," said little Rosy, looking up into his face.

The face was rather paler than usual, but there was a strength and power in it which even her young eyes saw. She rose gently from her seat beside him, kissed him good-night, and stole away.

CHAPTER V.

ROSY AT WORK.

ABOUT noon the next day a sergeant of police, standing in the door-way of the Station, noticed a little girl, who, after passing the building once or twice, stopped before the door.

"Do you want anything, child?" he asked, wondering what brought her there.

"If you please, sir, I want Mr. Policeman Hardy. Is he here?"

"Yes, he is here, as it happens. He doesn't belong to the police now; he is a man of business."

"That's the right one, sir."

"You'll find him inside. Go in."

He held the door open for her, and she passed into a large room. A knot of policemen sat around the stove, all listening intently to a story which a man sitting in the centre of the group was relating.

"Hardy," said the sergeant, "here is a visitor for you."

Mr. Hardy was sitting with his back toward the door. He turned to the little girl, who, rather startled to find herself among so many strangers, had drawn back near the door.

"If you please it's Mr. Policeman Hardy I wanted to see," she said. "I think he isn't here."

"My name is Hardy, and it seems to me that I know that face, although I cannot recall your name."

"My name is Rosy Conroy, sir. If you please I want the policeman who was so kind to Margery Bray when she

was sick. The voice sounds like, but you don't look the same."

"Ah, I remember!" said Mr. Hardy. "This is the child whom I used to see in Margery's room. Do you know me any better now?"

He raised his cap from his head, smiling as he did so, to reassure her, for she looked frightened and distressed.

"Oh, yes," she said, recognising his smile at once. "It's the same. Only that big whisker on your lip makes you look different."

Such a hearty peal of laughter broke from the knot of men around the stove that Rosy shrank back abashed, and her cheeks blushed painfully.

"Never mind," said Mr. Hardy, kindly. "Come here and tell me what you wanted with me, my little maid."

But Rosy's courage, which had been wound up to the highest pitch to undertake the task of seeking him out, was now fast failing her, and she whispered, timidly,—

"If you please I don't want anything for myself, it's for Ned. And—and—there's so many men here, I don't like it;" and her lip began to tremble as if she were on the verge of tears.

"Then we will go out into the street and talk there. I am going home, and if you live where you did, you can walk down with me."

"Yes, I live in the same place," said Rosy, very much relieved by the prospect of an escape.

Mr. Hardy turned away to speak a few words to his companions, and, coming again to her side, said,—

"Now I am ready,—shall we go?"

She slipped her hand confidently into his, and they passed out into the street.

"I am very glad to see you again," said the policeman, as they walked on together. "How are you all getting along this winter?"

"We are doing very nicely, now," said Rosy. "We

had a pretty hard time first. My brother didn't work much, and father sprained his foot so he couldn't peddle his wares for a while, and it was rather hard to manage. But brother Will works steady now, and father is all well again, so we are a good deal better off. But Ned is very bad off, Mr. Hardy."

"Ned? You spoke of him in the office. Is he the boy that Margery took such an interest in?"

"Yes, and he does have such a poor time. He tries real hard to do right, and everything seems to go against him. That's why I came to you, Mr. Hardy. He wants to go away, and I thought maybe you'd take him with you."

"Then he is a good sort of a boy, is he, Rosy?"

"He's the very best kind," said Rosy, fervently. "He's just as dear and good as he can be."

"He has a brave defender at any rate," said her friend, with an amused look.

"I can't bear to have him go," said Rosy, with a quiver in her voice. "But he says he must, to keep out of temptation."

"Why is it more safe for him to go south than to remain here, Rosy?"

"Because he's got bad friends here, Mr. Hardy." And she went on to tell him of all Ned's difficulties and trials, drawing such a vivid picture of the boy's many troubles, and his earnestness in striving to do right in spite of them all, that Mr. Hardy's sympathies were reached at once.

"And did he send you to me?" he asked, when she had told her story.

"No, sir. I came of myself. Mother seemed to think he'd have as bad a time away as he has here, and I thought if you would take him with you, maybe you could help him a little. For Margery's sake," she added softly.

"For Margery's sake," he repeated in the same tone.

"I would do much for her sake. And it is for the same reason that you are so willing to help Ned?"

"I do love to do anything that I'm sure she'd like; to help along anything she tried to do; and you know, Mr. Hardy, how much she wanted Ned to be a good boy. But I like to help Ned for his own sake, too, for I love him dearly."

"How did you happen to know that I was going away, Rosy?"

"It happened in a strange way. I was on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Broadway yesterday, taking care of my blind father. There were two policemen standing there, and one of them said to the other, 'John Hardy is going South.' I listened then, for I remembered the name so well, and right away I thought maybe you'd take Ned with you, and I made up my mind I'd find you out and ask you. I knew the Station you belonged to, so I went there first. Don't you think you could possibly take him?"

"I suppose he might be of use if he is a bright boy. I will see."

"He's as bright as a dollar," said Rosy, who was determined that nothing should prevent her desire. "Shall I tell him you'll take him, Mr. Hardy?"

"Not quite so fast, my child. I must see him first. Can you send him to my house to-night?"

"Yes, sir; I'll see him at six o'clock, and I'll tell him to go over there."

They had reached the corner of the street in which Rosy lived, and here they parted, each for their own home. Mr. Hardy walked on, thinking very seriously after Rosy left him. The little girl, whose story of the love of Christ had so won Ned's heart, had led this strong man also into the same blessed service. She had not done much,—nothing more than any little Christian child may do; but he had watched her day by day as she trod the path in which God

had seen it best to set her childish feet, and her simple faith, and trust, and love, had brought him to Jesus. Rosy had sought out the one of all others who would be most ready to aid her desire. There was a deep, solemn gladness in John Hardy's heart, as he thought of taking up the work which the child's dying hand had laid down.

Six o'clock and seven came and passed, but no Ned appeared. Mr. Hardy had an appointment at the Police-station at half-past seven, and he was leaving the house, having given a message for Ned to wait for him if he should arrive before his return, when the boy ran up the steps.

"Is this Ned Dolan?"

"Yes, sir," said Ned, recognising him at once. "Am I late, sir? I didn't get home till nigh seven, and I had to clean up a bit."

"I have an appointment at half-past seven, but if you can walk along with me, that will do as well."

Ned glanced down at his forlorn clothes.

"I aint fit to be seen in the street with you," he said, hesitatingly.

"Never mind that. You have made yourself look as well as you could, I don't doubt. Come."

They walked on together, talking as they went, and by the time they reached the Station everything had been arranged, and John Hardy was master of Edward Dolan's heart. His ready understanding of the boy's trials and his needs, his kindly sympathy, and his hearty promise of such aid as he could give, were enough to win any heart; and Edward Dolan's, aching for just such support, and yearning for just such comfort, opened its doors to him at once.

But they had reached their destination, and it was time for him to leave his new friend. Mr. Hardy had told him that he would let him know as soon as possible the result of his application, of the success of which he had no doubt,

and Ned was in the act of parting from him when a policeman came out upon the steps.

"Have you been walking in the street with that beggarly-looking fellow, Hardy?" said he.

Almost involuntarily the boy turned back. John Hardy saw the quick colour rush over his face, and laying his hand on his shoulder he said,—

"Why should I not walk with him? He is my friend."

It was a very simple thing to say, then and there; but a few weeks afterward he heard those words repeated in a way which brought the tears into his eyes, and a warm glow of grateful love into his heart.

John Hardy had obtained an appointment as surveyor of a large tract of land belonging to a South Carolinian planter, and he was to start on his journey in about a fortnight's time. He was not at all sure that he should need Ned's services, for the boy was too ignorant to assist him in his work, and he had already engaged all the aid which he required. But Rosy's earnestness, and above all the plea which she had urged, "For Margery's sake," made him wish to do all that he could for the friendless boy; and when he saw Ned, his hearty, manly determination to give up all that he valued on earth for the sake of the right, induced him to resolve at once to give him all the help which it was in his power to bestow; and he had promised, with scarcely a moment's hesitation, to take him with him on his expedition, in case he could obtain a situation for him.

CHAPTER VI.

LEAVING HOME.

IN a warm spring morning, two weeks after Rosy's visit to Mr. Hardy, Ned Dolan stood in his little garret room, with

his elbow resting on the shelf which held his small stock of crockery, gazing thoughtfully down upon the floor. He was no longer dressed in the old, patched clothes which he had worn for so many months, and the suit of grey cloth in which he now appeared made quite a different-looking boy of him. He seemed taller and more manly in this new dress, and the earnest, serious face, looked nearer twenty than fifteen years old. He had been standing there for a long time, when a slight rustling sound close beside him roused him from his reverie.

"Ah, little Dick," he said, glancing down at his pet who had disturbed him, "have you come to say good-by? There's no one will miss me like you, Dickie. Night and morning you'll watch for me, and I won't come; you'll want me sorely, I know, little man. Rosy'll miss me too, and Mother Conroy will give me many a kind thought. But they've got other people to love, and you and I were all alone together, Dick, in this great wide world; all alone together."

He stooped down to take the little creature in his hand, but Dick turned his head on one side, pricked up his ears, and then rushed frantically back to his hole.

"He hears something," said Ned to himself, and the next moment he caught the sound of steps.

"May I come in, fine gentleman?" said Rosy Conroy's voice.

"To be sure you may. Come and let's have our last talk in the old garret."

But Rosy looked more like having a last cry than a last talk. She had tried to speak very lightly when she asked permission to come in; but when she saw Ned standing there, looking as if he were ready to start off at once, her courage broke down, and running to him she clasped her arms around his neck, sobbing out,—

"O Neddie, Neddie! I can't bear to let you go!"

Ned tried to answer her, but something in his throat

seemed to choke him, and with a boyish feeling that tears were weak and foolish, he waited to recover himself a little before he said,—

“ There, Rosy, don’t take it so hard; listen to me. I want to ask you to do something for me. Will you take a bit of trouble for your old friend?”

“ I’d take a whole heap of trouble for you, Ned; you know I would,” said Rosy, lifting her head from his shoulder.

“ Well, you know, Rosy, when rich folks think they’re going to die, and sometimes I believe when they don’t think so, they write out a paper telling the folks that are left behind what they want done with their money and things. Now I aint going to die that I know of, but I’m going away, and if I haven’t got any money to leave behind, I’ve got something I love a heap better, and that’s my little Dick. May I leave him to you, Rosy? Will you take care of him for me?”

“ Yes, if he will let me, Ned.”

“ I guess he’ll let you, after a while. And if he shouldn’t you can put something beside his hole for him to eat. But it aint only the feeding of him, Rosy. I’m so afraid somebody’ll hire this garret that’ll catch him maybe. If anybody should come into it, would you beg for him and get them to leave him quiet? I can’t bear to think of anybody touching him.”

“ I’ll do all I possibly can,” said Rosy, earnestly.

“ That’s a nice girl! Won’t the little man be glad to see me when I get back?”

“ Do you feel very sure you’ll get back, Neddie?” asked the little girl, rather doubtfully.

“ Why, yes, I guess so, Rosy. I feel pretty comfortable about it. God has took very good care of me all along, you know, and I guess He’ll keep on. I don’t think He’d have made it all so easy for me, ever since I first began to think of it, if He’d meant any harm to come of it. He’s

made it very straight and plain for me—Him and you together."

"Me, Ned? I haven't done anything."

"Didn't you go to Mr. Hardy and get him to take me with him? I tell you, Rosy, you did more than you thought for, that time. He's the best friend a poor, lone fellow ever had; and if I get a chance to pay him, won't I take hold of it with a will! I'll never forget the way he spoke up for me when that man sneered at my looks. Why, if I'd been his own brother he couldn't have spoke more hearty; and laying his hand on my ragged shoulder too, as ready as if I'd been rigged up as fine as himself! He's a good one, I tell you; and it was all your doing, Rosy, that I got in with him. Whatever put it into your head to go to him?"

"I don't know, Ned, I'm sure. It seemed to come to me all of a sudden."

The boy made no reply, but sat quiet for so long that Rosy broke the silence by saying,—

"What are you thinking of, Ned?"

"I was thinking whether it wasn't God that put that notion into your mind. It was strange you should remember Mr. Hardy's name, when you hadn't seen him for a year; and then it was a queer thing that you should happen to hit upon the very time when he was at the Station. It seems somehow as if it was all got ready for you,—doesn't it?"

"Yes; it does seem so."

"I guess it is God working it all the way through," said the boy, thoughtfully. "'Deliver us from evil.' I believe He's going to answer our prayer,—all of it,—Rosy. And not for me only, either," he went on, drawing the child closer to him; "I believe it will be answered for you just as much. I don't think you need to be so much afraid of doing wrong when I'm gone as you was the other day. I don't wonder you feel so, 'cause I know

how good it is to talk to a body who feels just like you do : but then, it was God who gave us to each other, so that either one could be a help for the other, and I guess He'll make it up to us somehow. We don't see how, now ; but He does, and so we'll leave it to Him."

"Ned," said Rosy, after a little pause, during which her face caught something of the peace which rested on his, "I think you've grown such a great deal in these last few days."

"Do you?" Ned replied, rather surprised by the sudden change in the conversation. "I suppose my new clothes make me look taller."

"I don't mean that; but you seem so much stronger and wiser. You've got away up above me. I don't mean you've got away from me any; but I used to feel as if we were exactly alike, as if I could help you almost as much as you helped me: but now you seem to have gone farther than me,—not parted from me, but higher up,—so that I must reach up my hand to catch hold of yours. I don't mind it, Ned," she added, thinking she saw a shade upon his face. "I like it. It will make it easier for me to keep right; for I'll be all the time feeling that you will go too far beyond me if I am not careful. Only, Neddie," and a feeble attempt at a smile quivered over her lips, "don't go on too fast, for I'm only a little girl, and I'm all alone."

"I can never leave you behind, Rosy," said the boy. "I only wish you knew how much that little hand, that you say reaches up to mine, has done to lead me where I am,—God bless it!" and he took it in his own rough, strong hand, and kissed it. "I'll think of you every night and morning, and all day long; and it'll be a great strength for me to know that you'll think of me and pray for me, as I will for you. We can help each other yet, Rosy."

"Ned, Ned!" called Mrs. Conroy's voice, from below. "The Master is here."

The last moment had come. Rosy put her arms around his neck and kissed him. For a moment he stood there, returning her caress, then he gently unclasped the clinging arms, and, going to the stairs, said,—

“Can you give me two minutes, Mr. Hardy?”

“Yes; I will give you five, if you will make it up by walking the faster to the train.”

“I can do that, sir.”

He came back to where Rosy stood. She knew very well why he had asked for those two minutes, and, without a word, she knelt down upon the floor. The boy knelt beside her. His voice was low, but clear and distinct, as he gave himself and her into the tender care and keeping of the God who had led and blessed them for the past year. Rosy's trembling hand grew steady in his close, strong clasp, and her sinking heart gained courage as she listened to his trustful words. He ended his short prayer with that petition whose full, deep meaning he had so lately learned; and, rising from his knees, he bent to give her the last kiss.

“Ned,” she whispered, as his face touched hers, “I felt as if I was like a little lost child when I said good-by before; but now I feel as if you had lifted me right up and laid me safe in Jesus' arms.”

CHAPTER VII.

A TRUE FRIEND.

IT was more than two months since John Hardy and Edward Dolan left New York; and probably Rosy Conroy would scarcely have recognised her old friend, if she had seen him as he stood in the entrance to their tent, one June morning, waiting for Hardy, who had left him to

give some orders with regard to the horses. His face was bronzed with exposure to the hot, southern sun; and the roving, careless kind of life they led,—living on the game which their own skill must procure, and sleeping in tents or wherever they could find shelter from the dangerous night-damps,—had given him a manly, independent air, quite different from his former boyish appearance.

Those few weeks had been the happiest of Ned's life. John Hardy had taken great pains to teach him what it was necessary for him to know; experience had taught him still more, and he was already of great use to his friend in the work which he had engaged to perform. A new feeling of self-respect and honest pride was growing up in the boy's heart, side-by-side with the warmest affection for the man who had been so ready to aid him, and Ned was always on the watch for any opportunity to show him how fully all his kindness was felt and appreciated. They had been constantly together during these two months, and a close friendship had sprung up between them; for John Hardy could not resist the boy's hearty, grateful love for him, and he had come to look upon and treat him more like a younger brother than an inferior.

"Now, Ned," said his friend as he rejoined him, "we must be in the saddle as soon as possible. I mean to examine that tract of land bordering the precipice-road to-day. It is a dangerous road to be on after daylight, and as evening falls very early among these pines, we must make the most of our time."

A long ride through a heavy pine-forest lay before them, but at length they reached the ground to be surveyed. The land was very marshy, and thickly wooded; the road being a mere bridle-path, which fairly merited the name of the precipice-road, for the ground on the further side sloped for hundreds of feet, with an almost perpendicular fall toward a rushing torrent which flowed at its base. Even with such daylight as could pierce through the dark, over-

hanging masses of foliage, it was a perilous path to travel; and more than once their horses, slipping on some loosened stone or some treacherous tuft of moss, had nearly cost them a fall over the rocks. Finally, however, the dangerous road was traversed and their destination reached.

As they dismounted, and Ned turned to Mr. Hardy for further orders, he noticed that he was very pale, and that when he spoke to him he put his hand to his head, as if trying to collect his thoughts.

"Are you sick, sir?" asked Ned.

"No, I am not sick. A little dizzy, that is all. This southern sun is rather too much for me. I am glad that our work is about finished. Another day here will complete my survey."

It was not the first time that the heat had overcome him, and Ned was very uneasy, watching him carefully for some time. But after a while the colour came into his face, and he seemed so well that the boy forgot his fears for a time. Again and again during the day, however, he noticed that sudden paleness overspread Mr. Hardy's face, but he declared himself quite well, and the work went on as usual, Mr. Hardy directing the labour of the two men who aided them with all his usual energy and spirit, and laughing gaily at Ned's anxiety on his account.

"It is time for us to turn our faces homeward already," he said, sometime before sunset. "It will be dark on the road two hours before night really falls; and calling his party together, they all returned to the spot where they had tethered their horses.

The two workmen took the lead, being more familiar with the path, and Mr. Hardy followed, Ned bringing up the rear. Their horses had carried them safely over nearly all the most perilous part of the path, and they had but a short distance to travel before they would come upon a piece of road where they might ride two abreast. But between them and this safer road lay the most dangerous

spot of all,—a narrow ledge of rock, which they must pass in order to reach their forest home. Just as they gained this ledge Ned noticed that Mr. Hardy's reins seemed to hang on his horse's neck, and, wondering that he should ride so carelessly in such a place, he called to him,—

"Is it quite safe, Mr. Hardy, to let your reins lie so loosely?"

There was no answer given; and riding quickly forward, he called in a louder tone, startled by his silence,—

"Mr. Hardy, take care, sir! Prince will surely stumble!"

Still he did not reply, and as Ned's horse bore him still closer to him he saw that his head had sunk upon his breast, and that he began to sway from side to side with every motion of his horse. Another step would bring Prince upon that narrow ledge of rock. Ned tried to stop him, but the horse, missing the guiding hand which had brought him safely thus far, began to grow uneasy. Ned's voice had startled him, and when the boy again called out, "Stand, Prince! stand!" instead of obeying the order, he made a spring forward upon the path.

"Mr. Hardy!" shouted Ned, as he saw him reel in the saddle, "Mr. Hardy, rouse up! rouse up!"

His cry, sharp with terror, was not in vain. Mr. Hardy raised his head in a dull, half-stupefied way, and as Ned again shouted to him, saw his danger, and tried to grasp the rein. But it was too late. His quick movement startled his already restive horse. Prince reared suddenly on his hind feet. In another moment John Hardy would have been dashed down the frightful precipice upon the jagged rocks beneath. But there was a loving, grateful heart close beside him. As he slid from the saddle a strong arm seized him, and held him back from that awful death.

For one instant they looked into one another's faces, but only for an instant, for the terrified horses were plunging

and struggling upon the narrow pathway, both struggling to gain a foothold where only one could stand. Now, it was Ned's life which hung by a thread. Another furious plunge, and Prince, rearing again, staggered forward upon Ned's horse, and the two fell together, with the boy beneath them.

The heavy stupor which had benumbed John Hardy's faculties had been quite dispelled by this terrible excitement; and his voice rang out loud and clear as he shouted for help to the men who had turned to see what had detained their master. Prince had regained his feet, and Hardy had succeeded in dragging Ned from beneath his own horse; but the boy's face was fearfully cut and bruised by the hoofs of the struggling horses, and his right arm lay crushed and shattered at his side. He was quite conscious, however, and as the men, who had made all speed to reach him, gained his side, he tottered to his feet and tried to stand, leaning upon Hardy.

"Didn't you know it was death to try to pass a horse on that ledge?" said one of the men, as he ran forward to aid him.

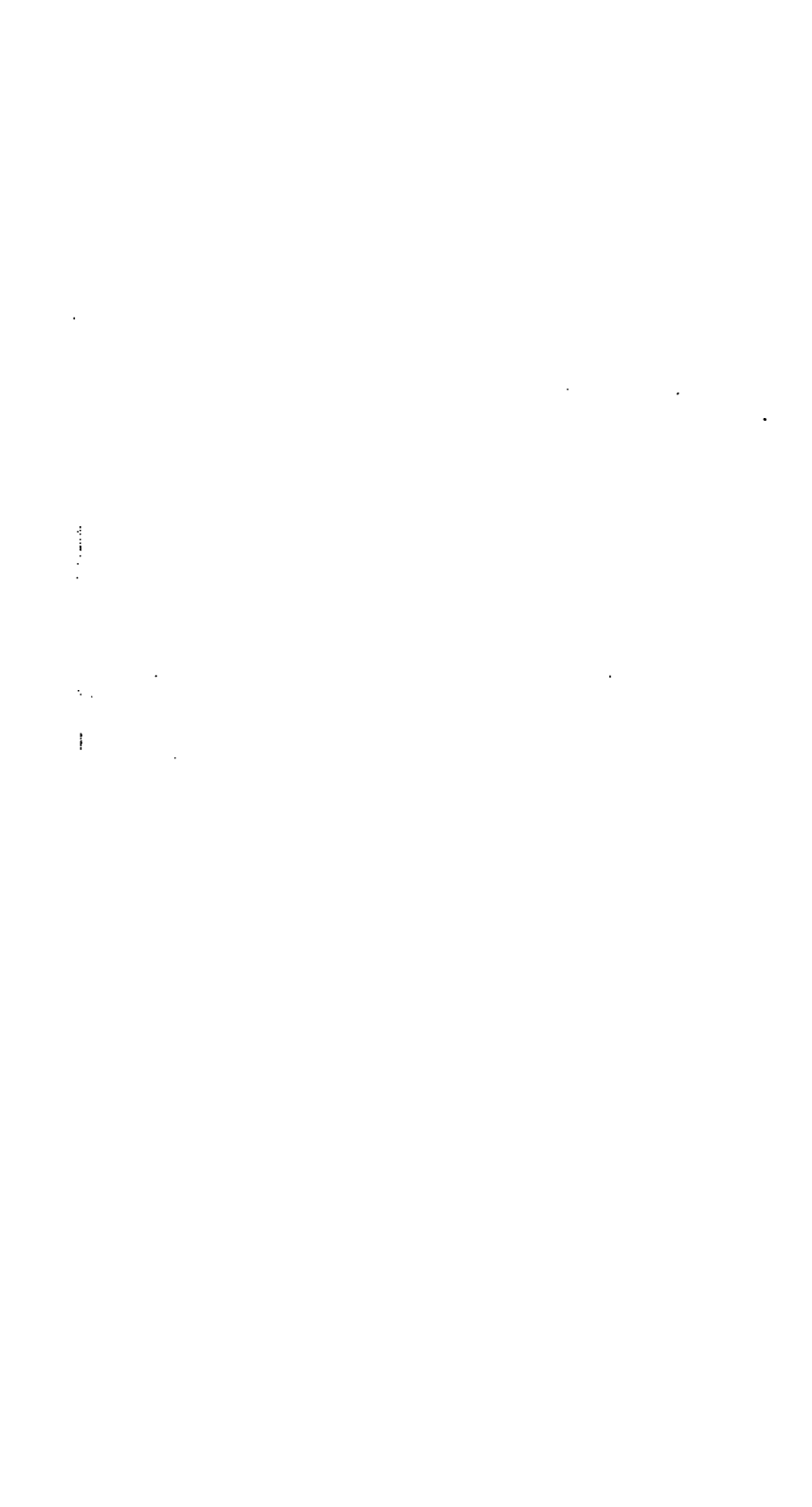
"Yes," said Ned, and the poor marred face was beautiful even in its disfigurement, as he lifted it to John Hardy. "Yes, I knew that it might be death, but the fall would have killed him, and — he is my friend."

He tried to grasp John's hand, but a deathly faintness seized him, and, staggering forward, he fell senseless into his supporting arms.

There were great tears in John Hardy's eyes as he bent over the white face which lay upon his arm, and his voice trembled like the voice of a woman, as he said, —

"Lift him tenderly, very tenderly, men. God grant he may not have given his life for mine!"

The men lifted Ned in their arms, Hardy being quite unable to aid them, for Prince, in his frantic efforts to rise, *had stepped* upon his foot, injuring it severely; and it was





“Staggering forward, he fell senseless into his supporting arms.”—P. 318.



only with great pain and difficulty that he could make his way over the stony path. On and on they walked until at length they reached the wider road. There the party halted, and Ned was laid upon a bed of moss; while one of the men, mounting his horse, rode off at full speed for help, and the other returned to the ledge to bring up the two horses which had been left behind.

It seemed to Hardy that an age passed before the man came back with the waggon for which he had been sent; but at last he heard the welcome sound of wheels, and his messenger appeared. But, even when they arrived at the nearest inn, no good medical aid could be obtained, and when day after day passed on without producing any improvement in Ned, he resolved to carry him to a hospital, situated many miles distant from the place to which he had been borne. It was a great risk to run, but it was a choice of evils, for Hardy felt sure that no aid which he could procure in that unsettled part of the country could help him, and so his determination was taken; and once taken, was carried out without delay.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN HOSPITAL.

“DELIVERED from evil! Delivered from evil!”

Those words, repeated over and over, had been sounding for hours through a hospital ward. They came from the pale lips of a boy who lay with bandaged head and face upon one of the beds, wholly unconscious of all that passed around him.

It was a pleasant, airy room. Long and comparatively narrow, with windows reaching nearly to the floor, from

which the weary eyes of the sick could gaze out upon a broad lawn, dotted here and there with bright flowers, and, looking still farther, could catch the white gleam of the waters of the bay. The grounds around the building were laid out in fields, enclosed by rough fences, over which blooming vines twined luxuriantly, bordering each field of grain or other produce with gaily-painted flowers. A sick man, condemned to long weeks and months of pain and weakness, could not have chosen a lovelier spot in which to spend the tedious days of convalescence; but its comforts and beauties were, as yet, quite unknown to Edward Dolan. For more than a week he had lain upon that bed, moaning with pain, or, when quieted by opiates, repeating the words, "Delivered from evil!" And during all those days John Hardy had watched over him with a brother's care and tenderness.

Day after day, and night after night, he had sat beside the boy, his anxiety retarding his own recovery, unwilling to leave him even for a moment. And through all those weary days Ned had not once known him. Sometimes the dark-grey eyes, so dull now, would fasten themselves on his face with a curious, searching look, as if they sought to read something there; but they always closed again without brightening into intelligence, or wandered away to fall upon some equally unrecognized object. His shattered arm had been amputated at the shoulder, and John Hardy's heart failed him as he looked forward to the moment when, if his life were spared, which was now a very doubtful question, he must learn that he was helpless and dependent. That his life should be as happy and as bright as his care and his love could make it, he was fully resolved; but he dreaded the hour when the active, manly boy, should be told that he must look to any other hand than his own for his maintenance and support.

He was leaning back in his chair in the window at the

head of Ned's bed one evening, enjoying the sweet scent of the roses which was wafted up from the garden, when the surgeon entered the ward. Passing slowly down the long line of beds, pausing at each to give a kind word of advice or encouragement to every patient, he at length reached the two friends.

"Mr. Hardy, how is your foot to-day?" he asked
"Shall I examine it?"

He knelt on one knee beside the chair on which the injured foot was raised, and gently removing the bandages, looked at it with a very serious face.

"You ought not to be here," he said. "I wish that you would go over to the opposite ward. This incessant watching is all against your own recovery. I will send you word immediately of any change in him."

"What do you think of him to-day?" asked Hardy, as if he had not heard the surgeon's advice.

"There was no improvement when I saw him three hours ago. It is an almost hopeless case; yet his youth and strong constitution may possibly carry him through."

He turned toward Ned as he spoke, and laid his hand upon his head.

"Why, what is this?" he said, quickly, but in a low voice. "His forehead is cool and moist!"

The boy stirred as the hand touched him, and, opening his eyes, lifted them to the doctor's face with a bright, intelligent look.

"I am a stranger to him; let him see you," said the surgeon to John Hardy, stepping from between him and the bed.

"Shall I speak to him?"

Ned gave a little start at the sound of that voice, and tried to turn his head toward it. Hardy rose and bent over him, so that, without moving, the boy could look into his face.

"Do you know who I am, Ned?"

He need scarcely have asked the question, for the glad light shining in those sunken eyes told how well he knew him.

"Yes, you are my friend. The horse did not throw you?"

"No, Ned. You saved my life."

"God heard me. I have been asking Him to deliver you from evil. It has been a long, long day. I am so very tired."

"The day is passed now. Close your eyes and try to sleep. I will sit here beside you."

"Well, that will be good," said Ned, in the easy, satisfied tone of a little child, contentedly sinking to rest in its mother's arms.

The surgeon left them together, and approaching a table in the centre of the room knocked gently upon it.

"Boys," he said, when he had thus engaged the attention of all in the ward, "I want perfect quiet here. The noble fellow who saved Mr. Hardy's life is on the road to recovery. He has fallen asleep, and it is of all things necessary that he should not be roughly wakened. I leave him to your care."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the gently spoken answer which passed down the length of the room, and the surgeon left the ward quite sure that no careless laughter or loud jesting would be suffered to disturb the sleeper.

It was a strange sight to see those rough men, many of them totally unused to a sick-room, moving about on tiptoe, or, where they were crippled, asking the support of some strong arm, to aid them lest the sound of their crutches on the bare floor might waken the boy. Conversation was carried on in the lowest tones, and the whole ward, occupied by nearly forty men, was as quiet as if the lives of all within it had depended on its stillness. They had all heard the story of Ned's bravery, and had watched the anxious face of Mr. Hardy as he sat beside him day

after day ; and their hearts had been so touched that more than one earnest prayer for the boy's life had been breathed by lips that had never spoken to him.

It was a great surprise to Ned to find, on awaking from his long, refreshing sleep, that he was not, as he had supposed, still lying where he had fallen ; and to hear from John Hardy that more than a week had passed since the accident took place. He received the news very quietly, seeming quite content to lie there without asking any questions, gazing dreamily out through the open windows upon the green lawn and the waving branches of the trees, or resting with closed eyes in a sort of half-dozed hour after hour.

As the long weeks rolled slowly away, Ned gained strength steadily, but slowly ; and the process of recovery was very long and tedious. Through all these days Ned had not once spoken of his loss. It seemed scarcely possible that he had not noticed it, and yet it was almost as strange if, knowing the fact, he was so indifferent to it as to let it pass without a word to his nearest friend. More than once Mr. Hardy had been on the point of speaking, but the fear that the boy felt it too deeply to mention it deterred him. The difficulty was solved for him by Ned himself.

He had been lying very quiet for some time one morning, when he suddenly made a slight movement, and then with a little laugh said, "I'm always forgetting that the old right hand is not here any longer. I tried to put it out just now to reach that glass of water. Will you give me a drink?"

Mr. Hardy handed him the glass, and when he had satisfied his thirst replaced it on the stand, and bending over him said in a low voice, that he might not be heard by those around, "Ned, I was afraid you felt your loss too bitterly to bear the thought of it."

"Bitterly!" repeated Ned. "When I gave it for you ! For the man who laid his true hand on me and owned me

for his friend when I was poor and forlorn! Bitterly! Why I'm the proudest boy in all the land!"

And he looked it as he raised himself on his pillows and gazed with that glad, triumphant smile into John Hardy's face.

"God bless you, boy!" was all that he found voice to say.

"I think it was a bit strange," said Ned, after a silence of some minutes, "that that prayer of mine should have been answered as it was. Don't you think so?"

"What prayer?"

"Perhaps I ought to say the two prayers,—'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' God let you answer the one for me; and then He gave me the chance to save you."

"I don't see that I had much to do with it, Ned."

"You took me right out of the way of temptation. Rosy Conroy had a good share in it, by searching you out and asking you to take me; but then you did bring me along, and ever since you've been on guard over me. You know you have; don't go to deny it. I'd be right disappointed to think I'd been mistaken all this time, and that you hadn't been taking care that I shouldn't be led off into wrong-doing."

"I didn't know that you had such sharp eyes, Ned. I imagine that you have watched over me quite as closely as I have over you. You are right. I have tried to guard you from temptation, so far as I could. But that was very little to do. All the soldiers in Christ's army must stand by one another if they mean that the final victory shall be His."

"Yes, I know," said Ned. "I suppose all good people would *say* that, but then they haven't all got the right way of *doing* it, like you have. It's such a nice thing to think of, that He's let us kind of work for one another so. I've asked Him so many, many times to deliver you from evil,

but it never came into my head that He'd put the chance right before me, and let me be the one to save you."

"I never understood that petition in this sense," said Hardy, thoughtfully. "I always looked at it as a mere continuance of 'Lead us not into temptation;' but you seem to take it as referring to bodily evil."

"Why yes, sir, that's the way I took it. I don't know but I'm wrong; but it seemed to strike my mind when I was talking to Rosy of leaving home, that if we said that to God real earnest, I would be safe enough. But, then, I remember, too, that when she was saying afterward that she was afraid to be left without me, lest she'd find it harder to do right, those same words seemed the very ones to say, and so I put her in mind of them. Maybe it means any kind of evil, whichever seems the nearest to us at the time. I guess God will answer them just the same if we say them real hearty, whether we're asking Him to save our best friend when he's in great danger of being killed; or to take care of a little fearsome child who's frightened to think that there'll be no one near to help her when she's tempted to sin. I think He'll hear it either way. I haven't been serving Him very long, but I've found already that He's mighty ready at answering; and He don't seem to mind much about the words, if we only want the thing we're praying for real bad."

"Yes, Ned, the earnest wish of our hearts is the real prayer. That is all He asks of us."

"The earnest wish, and the hearty working it out for ourselves as much as we can," said Ned. "A great deal has to be left to Him, but I think He's very likely to let us help things along ourselves; to fix them so, that if we've a mind to we can do a part of the work. I don't believe He means us to ask for a thing, and then sit down and idle away the time till it comes. Do you?"

"No; the busy brain and the willing heart must go

with the pleading lips. Sometimes, Ned, even the strong right hand must be sacrificed."

"Yes," said the boy, with a smile. "But let it go, so that He only answers the prayer."

CHAPTER IX.

HOME.

THE weather had become oppressively warm. The leaves of the trees hung motionless in the still, hot air, and the flowers drooped their heads, wilting under the burning rays of the sun. Toward evening a slight breeze generally sprang up, bringing a little relief from the exceeding heat, and the nights were comparatively cool; but all day long the fierce rays of the sun beat down relentlessly, and the air was so lifeless that the mere effort to breathe it was wearisome.

The warm weather told painfully upon Ned. He bore it very patiently, but Mr. Hardy saw that his strength was waning and his appetite failing, and was quick to notice that his own pleasant or playful words were answered by a quiet smile instead of a jest or merry retort, and that Ned became every day more grave and subdued.

He was himself far from strong. His foot was almost well, but he had grown very pale and thin, and he leaned heavily upon his cane when he walked. He was not really much gayer in heart than Ned; but the effort to keep up for the boy's sake was an advantage to him. He had conceived a plan of which he had not yet spoken to Ned, that he might not be able to accomplish it; but his was set upon it, and at length it was carried

He came into the ward one morning, and crossing the floor with an unusually quick step, said, "I have good news for you, Ned. Guess what it is."

Ned was sitting in the window in a cushioned chair, trying to catch a breath of air, if such a thing were possible. He looked up at his friend, noticing as he did so that the thin face was far brighter than he had seen it in many days; but his own face did not catch the reflection, and his voice was dull and spiritless as he replied,—

"I don't know, I'm sure, unless it is that it is cooler somewhere else than here."

"Poor fellow, this intolerable heat has exhausted you. But you have made a good guess, after all. It is cooler somewhere else than here, and you and I are to go to that somewhere. We are going home. What! Isn't even this enough to cheer you up, Ned?" he said, in rather a disappointed tone. "What is it, my boy? Don't you feel equal to the journey?"

"Yes, sir, I think I could stand the journey very well. But I am better here."

He paused a moment, and the pale lips were set firmly together to still their trembling. Then he said steadily, "I am glad you are going, it will do you good. You have worn yourself out with me."

"What do you mean when you say that you are better here, Ned?"

"I have no place to go to in New York. There is no such thing as home for me. Mother Conroy and Rosy would always be glad to see me; but they are poor, and I cannot let them take care of me. I will stay here till I am strong again, and then we will see what is best to be done."

"I can tell you now what is best. Mother Conroy is very kind to you, I know; but it is another mother who has to do with this question. I never want to hear you say again that there is no such thing for you as home."

From this time forward you and I are to be as one man. My strength is your strength, my home is your home, my mother is your mother. Do you understand what I mean?"

It was no wonder that he asked the question, Ned had raised his head with a look of such bewildered amazement; and he sat gazing at him without attempting the slightest reply.

"Are you content to come home now, Ned?"

Then he tried to answer; but the words would not come, and putting his arm around John Hardy's neck, he laid his head down upon his breast and cried like a little child.

Mr. Hardy let him lie there until he grew quiet again, and then, as Ned lifted his head from its resting-place, and dashed the tears from his face, he said,—

"Would you like to see your marching-orders? Read that."

Many tedious hours, since they had been in hospital together, had been whiled away in study. Ned was not a very learned man yet, but he had become a fair reader, and he had no difficulty in deciphering the clear, round hand, in which the letter handed to him was written. He had received many loving, grateful messages from Mr. Hardy's mother, and he knew, as soon as his eye fell on the paragraph pointed out, that he should find something pleasant there. He read it slowly, dwelling on each word with a sort of hungry delight:—

"I am waiting,—I was about to write, *impatiently*; but I cannot say that, when God has been so merciful to me and mine,—I am waiting with what patience I can gather for the coming of my two dear sons. To the elder, I need not speak of the tender care and love which shall minister to all his wants; and to my younger boy, to him who has dared and suffered so much for us, I will only say, Come to your mother."

Another letter came for Ned that afternoon. It was written in a large and exceedingly crooked hand; but he welcomed it none the less for that, for it was some little time since he had received any word from Rosy Conroy. "My own dear Neddie," was written in large letters at the head of the sheet, and the rest of the sentences were quite guiltless of capitals, and ran on, without comma or period, from the address to the signature. This is what Ned made out of it, after some study:—

"MY OWN DEAR NEDDIE:

"I have had another letter from that good, kind Mr. Hardy. He says you are coming home. Oh, I'm so glad, I don't know what to do! I just keep singing all the time because I'm so glad. I can't help it. Mrs. Hardy comes to see us sometimes. She's just as nice as she can be. She says you are going to live with her, and be her boy. It will be a good thing. Neddie, dear, you won't let them take you quite away from us, will you? They're so much grander than we are. They have a whole floor, in a nice brick house. I suppose they are quite rich, but they can't love you any better than we do. I don't believe anybody wants to see you so much as I do, my brave, good Neddie. I'd just like to give you my two hands, instead of the one that was cut off. You mustn't think I feel bad about your going there, because I don't; only I had to cry a little bit. Don't tell Mr. Hardy. Dick is well. The landlord has put lumber in the garret. Nobody lives there yet. Dick is getting quite nice. He lets me come almost close to him. Good-by, dear Neddie. Do love me always the same as you used to.

"Very much your dear

"ROSY CONROY."

"She needn't be afraid," was all that Ned said, after reading the letter ; but if Rosy had heard him say it, she would have felt very safe.

It was quite surprising to see how much Ned gained in the two or three days which intervened before his journey. Every hour as it passed, seemed to bring him strength both of body and of mind, in spite of the continued heat.

"It is wonderful!" said the surgeon to Mr. Hardy, as they stood together talking of the boy, on the day fixed upon for their departure. "I am really astonished!"

But Mr. Hardy was less at a loss to account for the change.

"I believe you have been playing old soldier," said the surgeon, as he aided the nurse, who had supported Ned from the ward, to place him in the carriage which was to bear him to the boat. "I have half a mind, now, to order you back again."

"All right, sir," replied Ned, looking up with a smile into the face of the man who had tended him like a father for weeks and months. "I will obey any order that you give me."

"Very well, here is my positive order. Let Mr. Hardy go home without you," he said, with pretended gravity.

"I can only give a half-obedience to that command," said Ned. "My feet may stand on these walks, but my heart will go with him. It isn't in my keeping any longer ; I gave it into his months since."

The surgeon laughed, and bidding him a hearty good-bye, assisted Mr. Hardy into the carriage, and closed the door.

"Ned," said Mr. Hardy, when they had been riding some minutes, "you can take your last look at the hospital. It will be out of sight in a moment."

The boy raised himself to look out of the window, and when he leaned back, having passed beyond the view of the hospital walls, his friend said,—

"We've left the place for good, Ned, and from this time our relations change. I am no longer Mr. Hardy to you."

"What then, sir?"

"John. We are brothers now. There is no longer any Mr. or Mrs. Hardy, you have only mother and John."

"Mother and John!" There was a world of comfort and enjoyment in the tone in which the words were repeated; and then he laid his head down upon John's shoulder, and the drive to the boat was taken in silence.

"Oh, Neddie, don't the other hand look so lonesome?"

Rosy Conroy's round, dimpled hand, was lying on Ned's empty coat-sleeve, and her usually laughing black eyes were lifted to his face with a very pitiful look. She had that morning received a note from Mr. Hardy, telling her that Ned had reached home on the previous evening, and that he wanted to see her. She had gone joyfully to him, but the change in his appearance had startled her greatly. He was very much altered. The long, thin face, deeply scarred on cheek and temple, had nothing in it to remind her of the Ned who left her five months before, except the bright grey eyes and the pleasant smile; and the broad shoulders had become bent and stooping, like the shoulders of a feeble old man. And then, that empty sleeve! She could hardly realize that it was the same boy, until he put his arm around her and said, in his old gay voice,—

"Don't take it so hard, Rosy. It don't give me the heart-ache to think of it. The doctor says I will grow stronger and stouter every day now. I shall soon be like myself again. And I shall be as happy as a king here. Only think how rich I am with a mother and a brother, and this dear little sister! There comes mother, now."

The door opened as he spoke, and Mrs. Hardy came in, followed by her son. The pale, delicate face, surrounded

by the close widow's cap, was always very gentle in its expression, but it seemed to Rosy that its look softened even more as she bent over Ned's lounge.

"Do you want anything, my boy?" she asked, stroking back from his forehead a stray lock of hair.

"No, indeed! I wouldn't have anything changed for the world. I'm as content and as happy as a fellow can possibly be. Sit down beside me, mother. Here, John, come and sit at the foot of the lounge. Oh, isn't this good?" he said, drawing a long breath of complete satisfaction when they were both seated.

"Don't you wish Dick was here, Ned?" asked Rosy.

"Yes, I would like to see the little man. But I'll go over as soon as I can. I'll have to go to see him, I suppose, he'd never be content anywhere but in the old garret. How things have changed! How different everything was with me last spring! Then I had nothing, and now I've got everything."

"Yes," said Rosy, "I'm so glad for you. It is very strange. You was in such a bad way then, and now it has all come round so good. 'Twas God did it—wasn't it, Ned? What a great deal He can do!"

"Yes," said Ned, "He can do a great deal. Sometimes it seems to me as if it couldn't all be as it is; as if I couldn't be so different and feel so different from what I used to; like it was a dream, and couldn't last. But when I get troubled that way I always take comfort again in thinking that it is His doing, not mine; and if He could make the change, He can carry it through. 'For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,'" he added, in a tone of quiet trust and confidence.

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